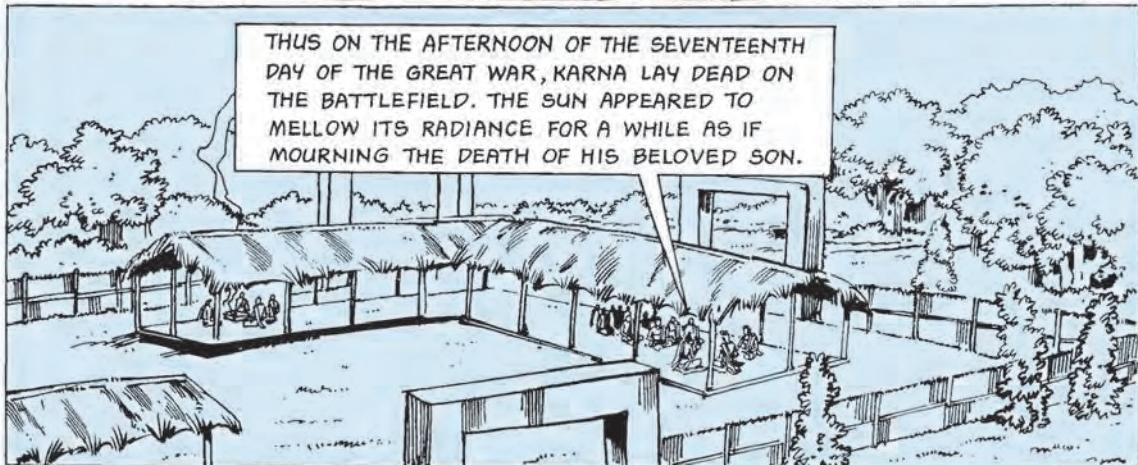


# Mahabharata-38

## THE KURUS ROUTED

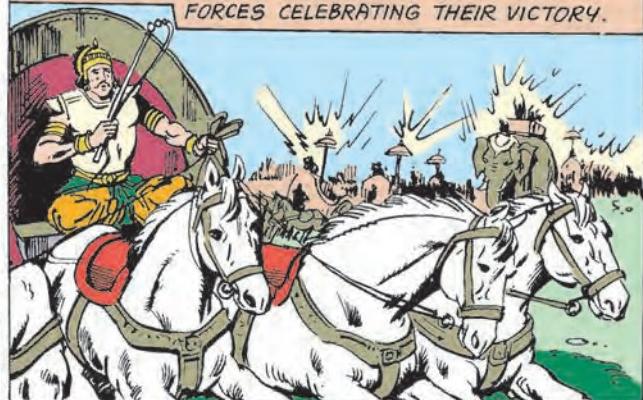
THUS ON THE AFTERNOON OF THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF THE GREAT WAR, KARNA LAY DEAD ON THE BATTLEFIELD. THE SUN APPEARED TO MELLOW ITS RADIANCE FOR A WHILE AS IF MOURNING THE DEATH OF HIS BELOVED SON.



"A TEARFUL SHALYA DROVE THE CHARIOT BACK, DIVESTED OF BOTH ITS BANNER AND OWNER."



"HIS EARS WERE FILLED WITH THE TRIUMPHANT CRIES OF REJOICING EMANATING FROM THE PANDAVA FORCES CELEBRATING THEIR VICTORY."



"DHRITARASHTRA ASKED SANJAYA —

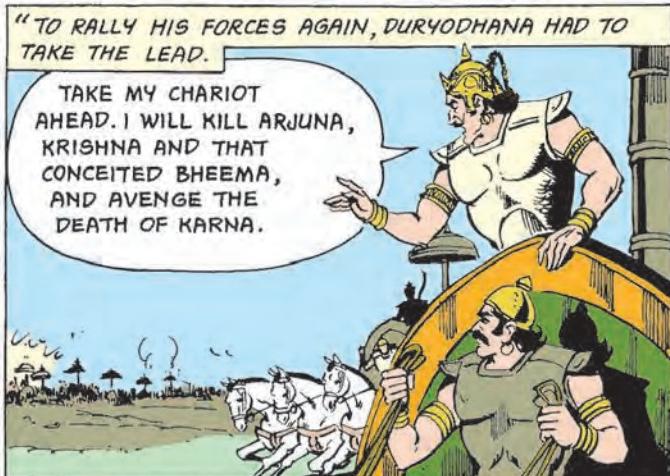
WHAT WAS THE STATE OF OUR ARMY AFTER THE FEARSOME DUEL BETWEEN KARNA AND ARJUNA?

OUR SOLDIERS WERE LIKE A HERD OF BULLS SHORN OF THEIR HORNS OR LIKE SERPENTS DEPRIVED OF THEIR FANGS. THE ARMY WAS IN TOTAL DISARRAY.



"TO RALLY HIS FORCES AGAIN, DURYODHANA HAD TO TAKE THE LEAD."

TAKE MY CHARIOT AHEAD. I WILL KILL ARJUNA, KRISHNA AND THAT CONCEITED BHEEMA, AND AVENGE THE DEATH OF KARNA.



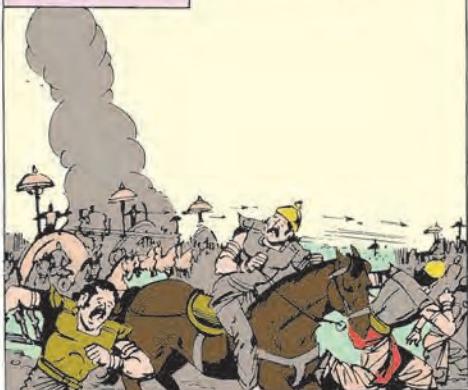
"BHEEMA JUMPED DOWN FROM HIS CHARIOT AND WITH HIS MACE MERCILESSLY KILLED THE SOLDIERS ON FOOT..."



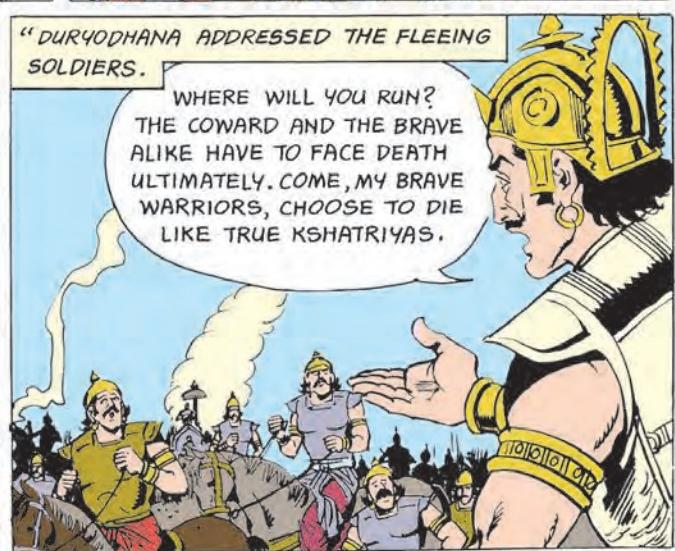
...WHILE ARJUNA ATTACKED THE WARRIOR ON CHARIOTS.



"TORMENTED BY THE ARROWS OF DHRISHTADYUMNA, SHIKHANDI, NAKULA AND SAHADEVA, THE KAURAVA SOLDIERS BEGAN TO FLEE THE BATTLEFIELD."



"DURYODHANA ADDRESSED THE FLEEING SOLDIERS.



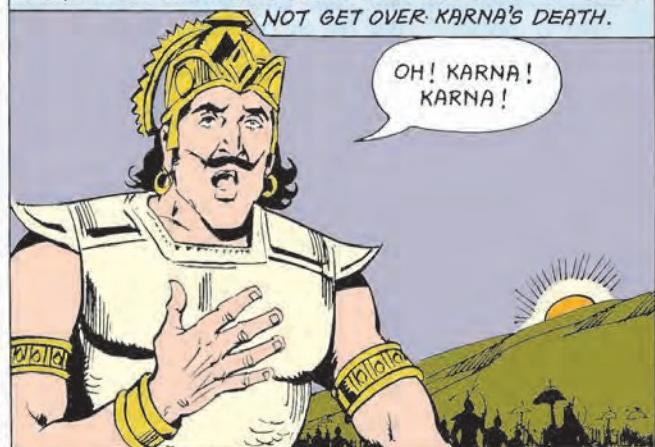
WHERE WILL YOU RUN?  
THE COWARD AND THE BRAVE ALIKE HAVE TO FACE DEATH ULTIMATELY. COME, MY BRAVE WARRIOR, CHOOSE TO DIE LIKE TRUE KSHATRIYAS.

"BUT THE WOUNDED AND FRIGHTENED SOLDIERS WERE IN NO MOOD TO HEAR HIS DISCOURSE. THEY RAN AS FAST AS THEIR FEET COULD TAKE THEM. SHALYA SAID TO DURYODHANA —

BEHOLD, O KING! THE FIELD IS STREWN WITH FALLEN SOLDIERS. COME, LET US RETURN TO CAMP. ALLOW THE SOLDIERS TO GO BACK.



"DURYODHANA COULD NOT CONTROL HIS TEARS AS THEY MADE THEIR WAY BACK TO THEIR CAMP. HE COULD NOT GET OVER KARNA'S DEATH.



THE KURUS ROUTED

"IN A JUBILANT MOOD, KRISHNA AND ARJUNA RETURNED TO THE CAMP."

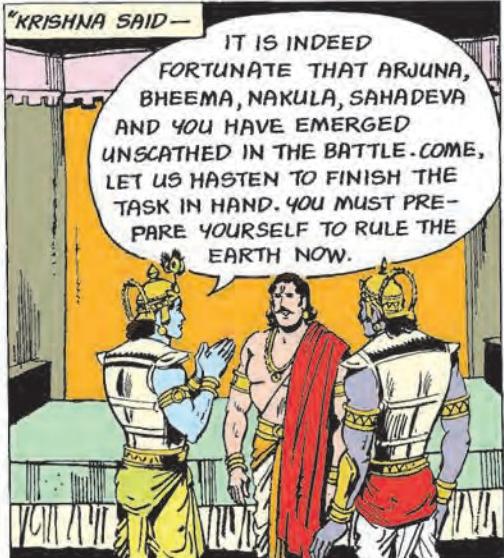


"THEY RUSHED TO YUDHISHTHIRA'S TENT TO CONVEY THE NEWS OF KARNA'S DEATH."



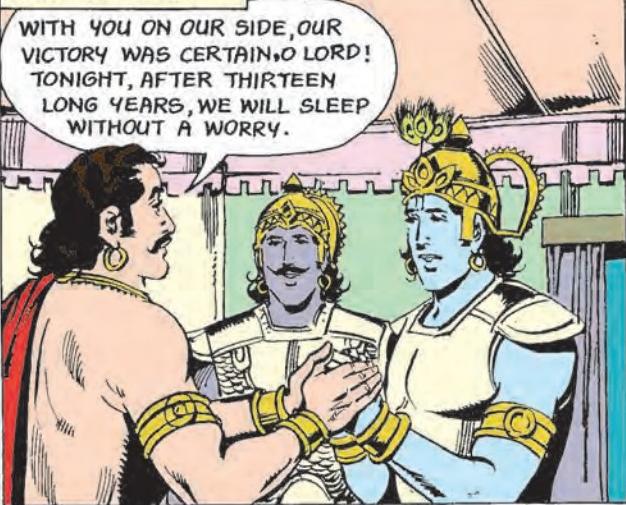
"KRISHNA SAID—

IT IS INDEED FORTUNATE THAT ARJUNA, BHEEMA, NAKULA, SAHADEVA AND YOU HAVE EMERGED UNSCATHED IN THE BATTLE. COME, LET US HASTEN TO FINISH THE TASK IN HAND. YOU MUST PREPARE YOURSELF TO RULE THE EARTH NOW.



"YUDHISHTHIRA AFFECTIONATELY HELD KRISHNA'S HAND AND SAID—

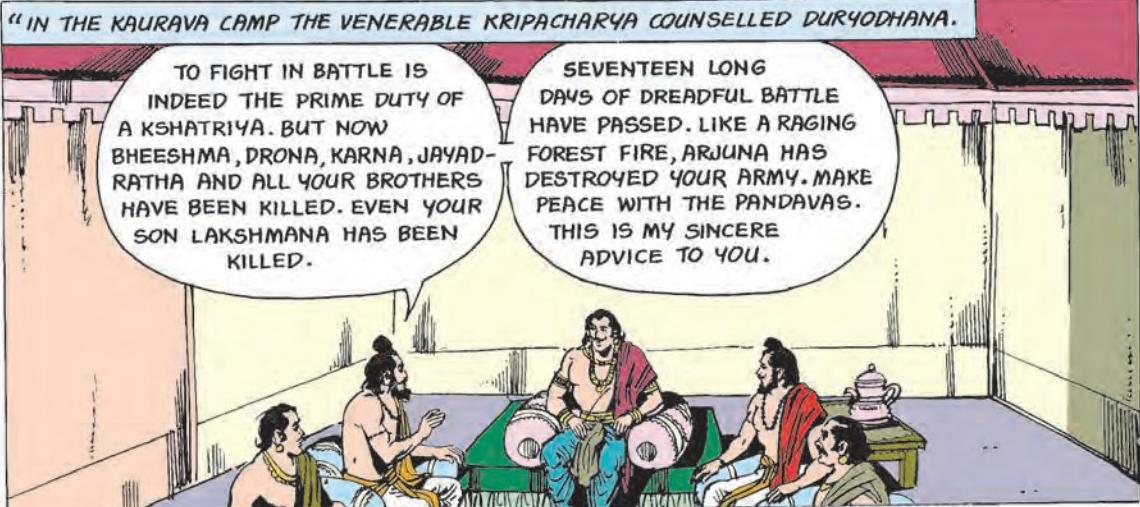
WITH YOU ON OUR SIDE, OUR VICTORY WAS CERTAIN, O LORD! TONIGHT, AFTER THIRTEEN LONG YEARS, WE WILL SLEEP WITHOUT A WORRY.



"IN THE KAURAVA CAMP THE VENERABLE Kripacharya counselled Duryodhana.

TO FIGHT IN BATTLE IS INDEED THE PRIME DUTY OF A KSHATRIYA. BUT NOW BHEESHMA, DRONA, KARNA, JAYADRATHA AND ALL YOUR BROTHERS HAVE BEEN KILLED. EVEN YOUR SON LAKSHMANA HAS BEEN KILLED.

SEVENTEEN LONG DAYS OF DREADFUL BATTLE HAVE PASSED. LIKE A RAGING FOREST FIRE, ARJUNA HAS DESTROYED YOUR ARMY. MAKE PEACE WITH THE PANDAVAS. THIS IS MY SINCERE ADVICE TO YOU.

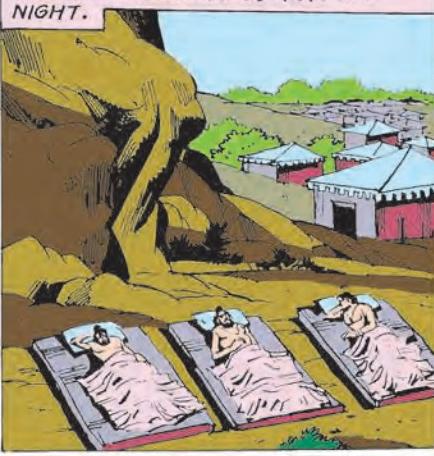
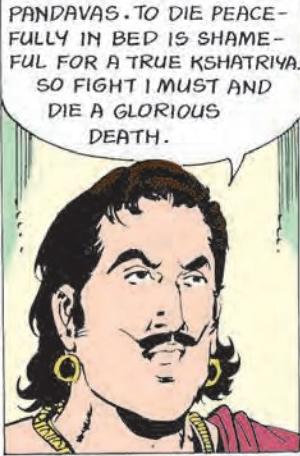
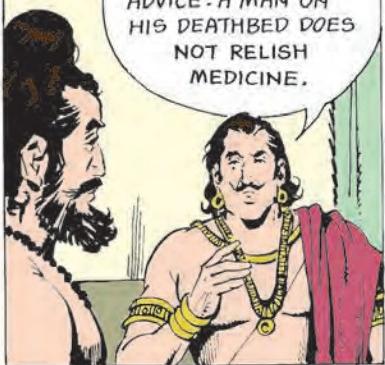


"FOR A WHILE, DURYODHANA SAT SILENT. THEN WITH A SIGH HE SAID—

I KNOW YOU MEAN WELL, BUT I CANNOT TAKE YOUR ADVICE. A MAN ON HIS DEATHBED DOES NOT RELISH MEDICINE.

HAVING RULED OVER THE ENTIRE EARTH, HOW CAN I BE A DEPENDANT OF THE PANDAVAS. TO DIE PEACEFULLY IN BED IS SHAMEFUL FOR A TRUE KSHATRIYA. SO FIGHT I MUST AND DIE A GLORIOUS DEATH.

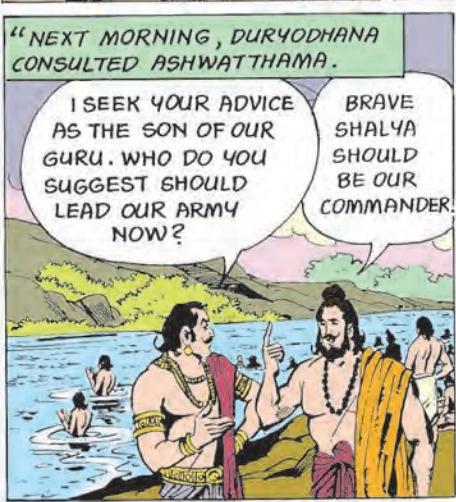
"HIS SOLDIERS HAILED HIS DECISION AND RESOLVING TO FIGHT THE NEXT DAY THEY ALL RETIRED FOR THE NIGHT.



"NEXT MORNING, DURYODHANA CONSULTED ASHWATTHAMA.

I SEEK YOUR ADVICE AS THE SON OF OUR GURU. WHO DO YOU SUGGEST SHOULD LEAD OUR ARMY NOW?

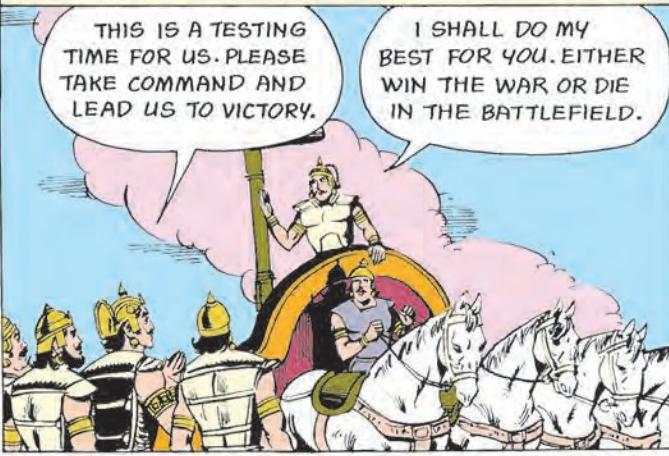
BRAVE SHALYA SHOULD BE OUR COMMANDER.



"DURYODHANA REQUESTED SHALYA TO TAKE CHARGE.

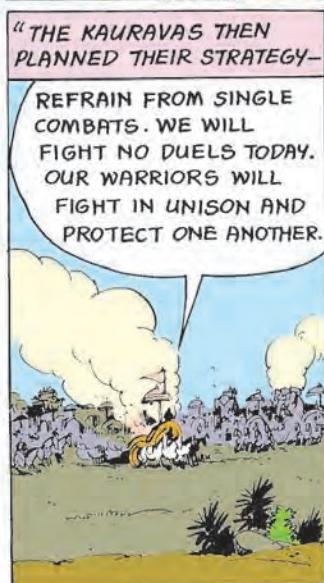
THIS IS A TESTING TIME FOR US. PLEASE TAKE COMMAND AND LEAD US TO VICTORY.

I SHALL DO MY BEST FOR YOU. EITHER WIN THE WAR OR DIE IN THE BATTLEFIELD.



"THE KAURAVAS THEN PLANNED THEIR STRATEGY—

REFRAIN FROM SINGLE COMBATS. WE WILL FIGHT NO DUELS TODAY. OUR WARRIOR WILL FIGHT IN UNISON AND PROTECT ONE ANOTHER.



"WHEN THE KAURAVA SOLDIERS LEARNT THAT SHALYA WOULD BE THEIR COMMANDER, THEY CHEERED SO LOUDLY THAT YUDHISHTHIRA COULD HEAR THEM.

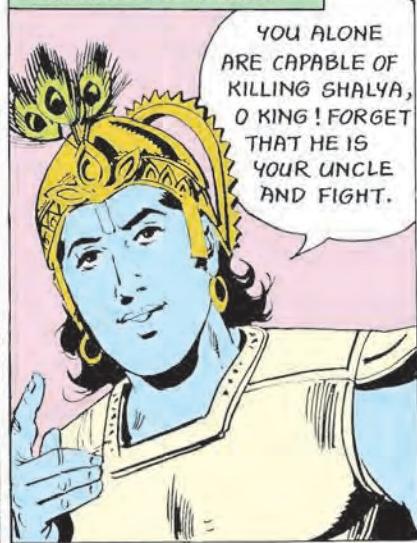
I THINK SHALYA, THE ACE ARCHER, HAS BEEN PUT IN COMMAND. O KRISHNA, WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST WE SHOULD DO?

SHALYA IS INDEED SUPERIOR TO STALWARTS LIKE SHIKHANDI.



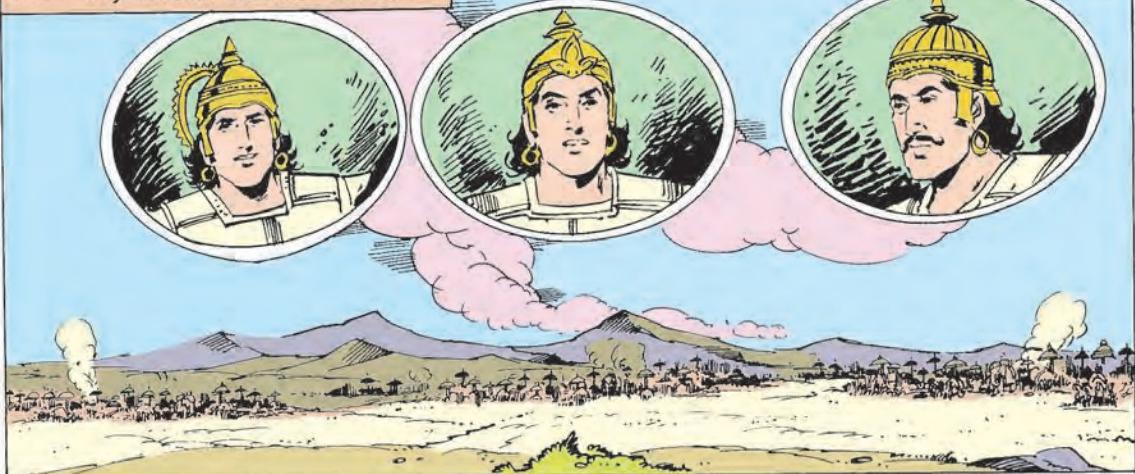
"KRISHNA CONTINUED —

YOU ALONE ARE CAPABLE OF KILLING SHALYA, O KING! FORGET THAT HE IS YOUR UNCLE AND FIGHT.



THE KURUS ROUTED

"THE PANDAVAS DIVIDED THEIR FORCES INTO THREE DIVISIONS, HEADED BY DHRISHTA-DYUMNA, SHIKHANDI AND SATYAKI.



"IN HIS IMPATIENCE TO KILL SHALYA, YUDHISHTHIRA RAPIDLY ADVANCED TOWARDS HIM.



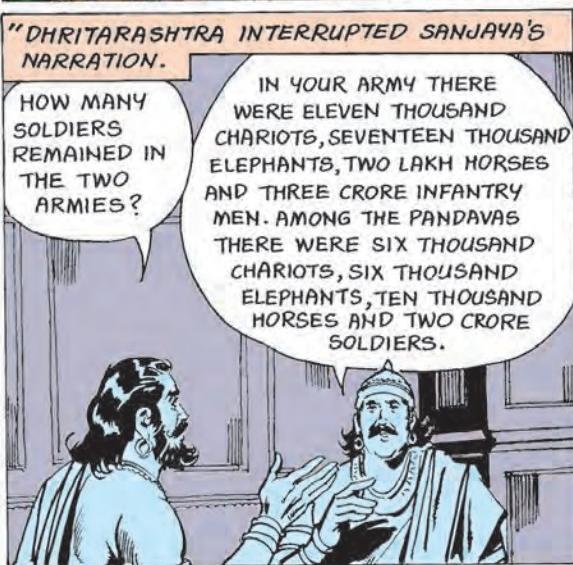
"ARJUNA ATTACKED THE SAMSHAPTAKAS AND BHEEMA FELL UPON SHAKUNI.



"DHRITARASHTRA INTERRUPTED SANJAYA'S NARRATION.

HOW MANY SOLDIERS REMAINED IN THE TWO ARMIES?

IN YOUR ARMY THERE WERE ELEVEN THOUSAND CHARIOTS, SEVENTEEN THOUSAND ELEPHANTS, TWO LAKH HORSES AND THREE CRORE INFANTRY MEN. AMONG THE PANDAVAS THERE WERE SIX THOUSAND CHARIOTS, SIX THOUSAND ELEPHANTS, TEN THOUSAND HORSES AND TWO CRORE SOLDIERS.



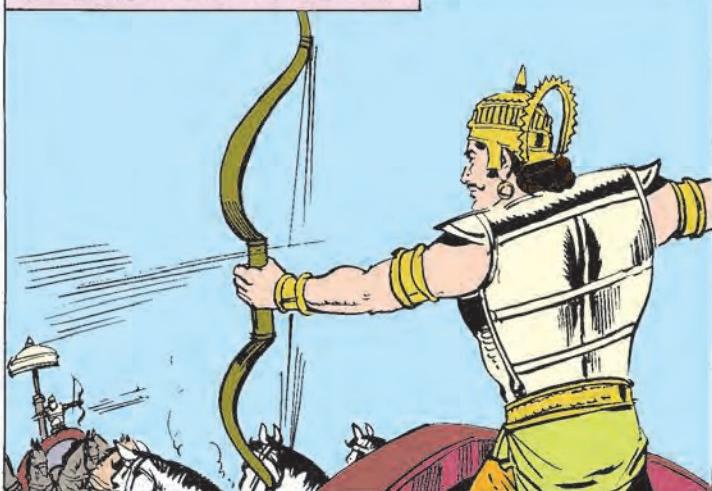
"WITH YUDHISHTHIRA LEADING THE WAY, DHRISHTADYUMNA AND SHIKHANDI, NAKULA AND SAHADEVA TOGETHER FELL UPON SHALYA.



"THE KAURAVA SOLDIERS WERE FRIGHTENED OF THIS COMBINED ATTACK. BUT SHALYA WAS UNDAUNTED. HE TOLD HIS CHARIOTEER.



"INDEED SHALYA ALONE WAS CAPABLE OF RESTRAINING THE SURGING PANDAVA FORCES."



"JUST THEN, NAKULA ATTACKED KARNA'S SON, CHITRASENA. BEING EQUALLY WELL-MATCHED IN PROWESS, THEIR DUEL WAS LONG DRAWN AND FURIOUS. NAKULA'S CHARIOT WAS DESTROYED. WITH HIS SWORD HELD aloft, HE ADVANCED TOWARDS CHITRASENA."



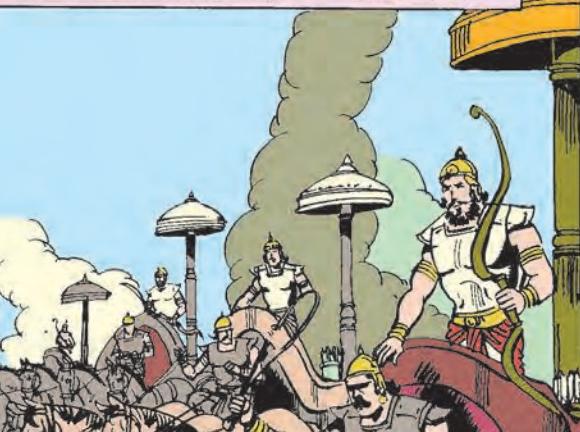
"SUDDENLY, HE LEAPED onto CHITRASENA'S CHARIOT, AND WITH A FATAL BLOW FROM HIS SWORD, BEHEADED HIM."



"CHITRASENA'S BROTHERS, SUSHENA AND SATYASENA ATTACKED NAKULA, BUT SOON MET WITH THE SAME FATE AS CHITRASENA."



"SEEING SHALYA BEING ATTACKED BY THE PANDAVAS, RRITAVARMA, KRIPA, SHARUNI AND ASHWATTHAMA CAME TO HIS HELP."



THE KURUS ROUTED

"AN ENRAGED KRITAVARMA INFILCTED A WOUND ON BHEEMA."



"KRIPACHARYA WORRIED DHRISHTADYUMNA WITH A VOLLEY OF ARROWS..."



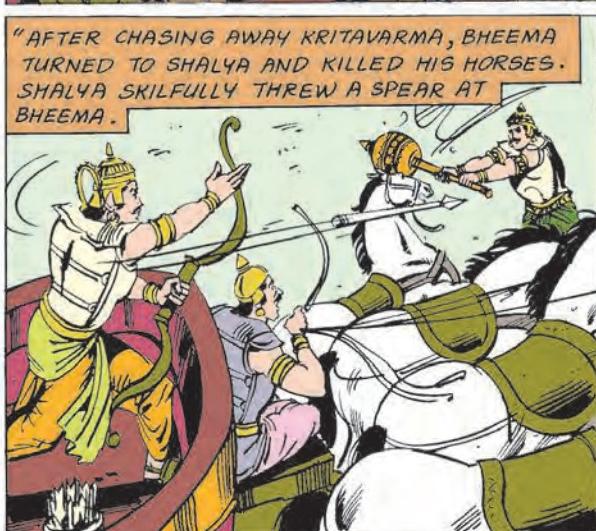
"...AND ASHWATTHAMA ATTACKED NAKULA AND SAHADEVA."



"WHEN BHEEMA'S HORSES WERE KILLED BY KRITAVARMA, HE JUMPED DOWN FROM THE CHARIOT, BRANDISHING HIS MACE."



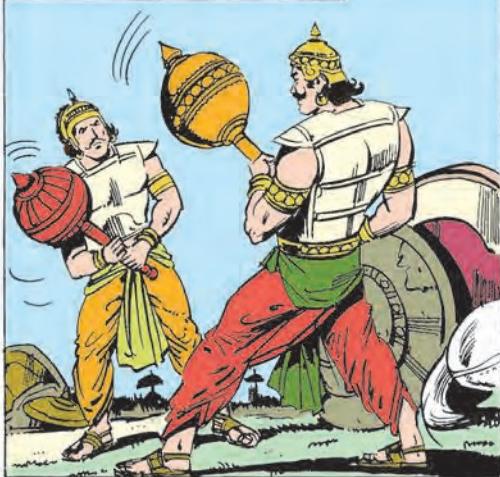
"AFTER CHASING AWAY KRITAVARMA, BHEEMA TURNED TO SHALYA AND KILLED HIS HORSES. SHALYA SKILFULLY THREW A SPEAR AT BHEEMA."



"UNRUFFLED, BHEEMA CAUGHT THE WEAPON IN HIS HAND AND THREW IT BACK AT SHALYA'S CHARIOOTEER SO SWIFTLY THAT HE FELL OFF."



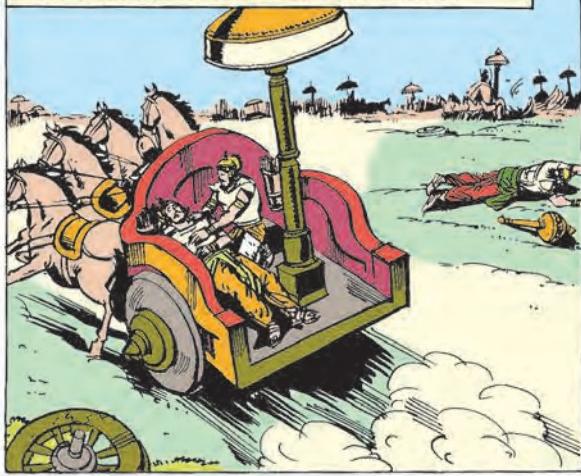
"SHALYA THEN TOOK UP A MACE STANDING TALL LIKE A MOUNTAIN. THE TWO WARRIOR RESEMBLED TWO ENRAGED BULLS RARING FOR A FIGHT."



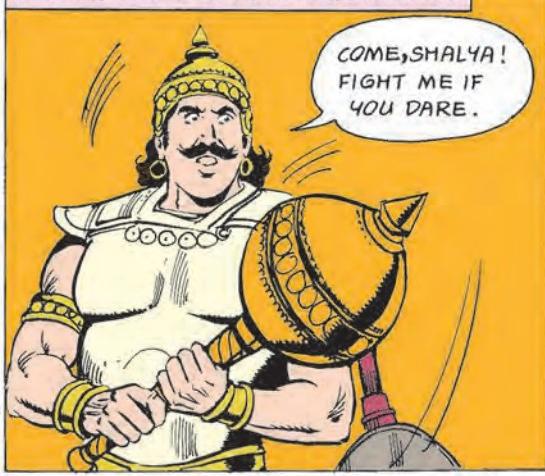
"SPARKS FLEW EACH TIME THEIR MACES CLASHED. WOUNDED AND BLEEDING PROFUSELY, THEY CIRCLED, REARED AND ATTACKED TILL BOTH OF THEM COLLAPSED SIMULTANEOUSLY."



"Kripacharya quickly put Shalya on his own chariot and took him away."



"ON RECOVERING, BHEEMA SPRANG UP WITH A ROAR, READY FOR THE FRAY AGAIN."



"THE ENTHUSED SOLDIERS FROM BOTH ARMIES SEEMED ALL EAGER TO EMBRACE DEATH. THE BATTLEFIELD RESOUNDED WITH THEIR BLOOD-CURDLING CRIES."



"SHALYA AND YUDHISHTHIRA WERE ONCE AGAIN IN DIRECT CONFRONTATION; WHEN YUDHISHTHIRA CUT OFF SHALYA'S BANNER WITH A WELL-AIMED SPEAR, HE RETALIATED BY COVERING HIM WITH A CLOUD OF ARROWS."



THE KURUS ROUTED

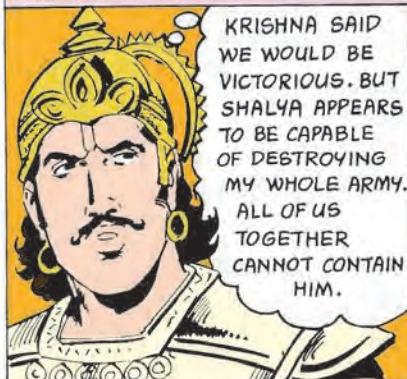
"SATYAKI, BHEEMA, NAKULA AND SAHADEVA RUSHED TO YUDHISHTHIRA'S SIDE AND HARASSED SHALYA.



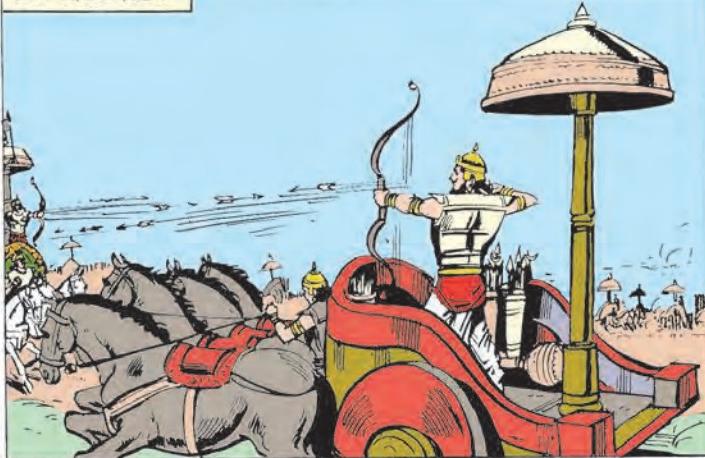
"BUT SHALYA TOOK GOOD CARE OF HIMSELF, ATTACKING SATYAKI, BHEEMA AND NAKULA WITH A SHOWER OF ARROWS.



"THE PANDAVAS TRIED VARIOUS WEAPONS ON SHALYA, BUT HE LIVED UP TO HIS REPUTATION OF A GREAT WARRIOR. HE QUELLED THEM ALL. A NIGGLING DOUBT BEGAN TO TORMENT YUDHISHTHIRA.



"MEANWHILE, ARJUNA AND ASHWATTHAMA WERE LOCKED IN COMBAT. ARJUNA'S CHARIOT WAS BARELY VISIBLE UNDER THE ARROWS.

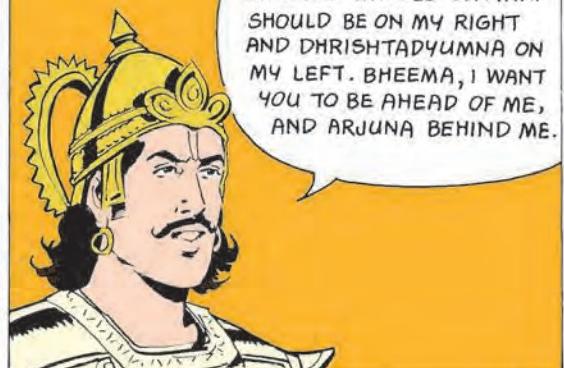


"NOTING SHALYA'S PROWESS, YUDHISHTHIRA CALLED HIS BROTHERS TOGETHER.

BHEESHMA, DRONA, KARNA AND OTHER WARRIORS FELL BECAUSE OF YOUR EFFORTS. NOW SHALYA ALONE REMAINS. LEAVE THIS TASK TO ME.



I WANT NAKULA AND SAHADEVA TO GUARD MY CHARIOT WHEELS. SATYAKI SHOULD BE ON MY RIGHT AND DHRISHTADYUMNA ON MY LEFT. BHEEMA, I WANT YOU TO BE AHEAD OF ME, AND ARJUNA BEHIND ME.



"READY, THE BROTHERS AGREED. LIKE TWO HUNGRY LIONS POUNCING ON A PREY, YUDHISHTHIRA AND SHALYA LUNGED AT EACH OTHER."



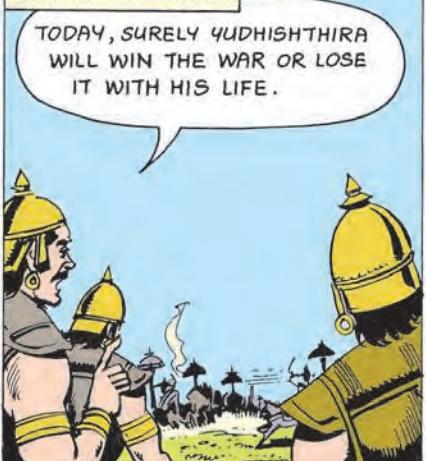
"THE MILD AND CALM YUDHISHTHIRA APPEARED TO BE TRANSFORMED INTO A DETERMINED AND FORMIDABLE FOE."



"LIKE A STRONG GUST OF WIND DISPELLING CLOUDS, YUDHISHTHIRA PLAYED HAVOC WITH THE KAURAVA ARMY."



"SO GALLANTLY DID YUDHISHTHIRA AND SHALYA FIGHT THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY WHO WOULD WIN IN THE DUEL."

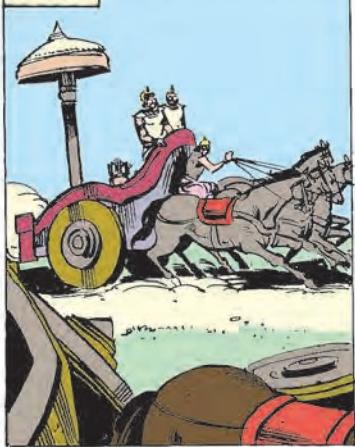


"SHALYA FIRED A HUNDRED ARROWS ON YUDHISHTHIRA WHO RETALIATED WITH THREE HUNDRED. SOON SHALYA'S REAR GUARDS WERE KILLED, HIS HORSES SLAIN AND BANNER FELLED."

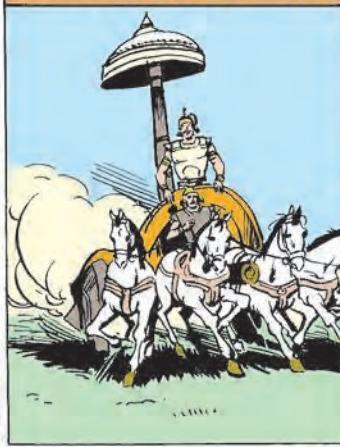


THE KURUS ROUTED

"NOTING SHALYA'S PLIGHT, ASHWATTHAMA QUICKLY PUT HIM ON HIS OWN CHARIOT AND CARRIED HIM AWAY.



"YUDHISHTHIRA ROARED LIKE A LION AS HE SAW HIS ADVERSARY GETTING AWAY. BUT SOON SHALYA WAS BACK ON ANOTHER CHARIOT.



"BHEEMA, SATYAKI, NAKULA AND SAHADEVA FORMED A PROTECTIVE RING ROUND YUDHISHTHIRA AND CHALLENGED SHALYA TO FIGHT.



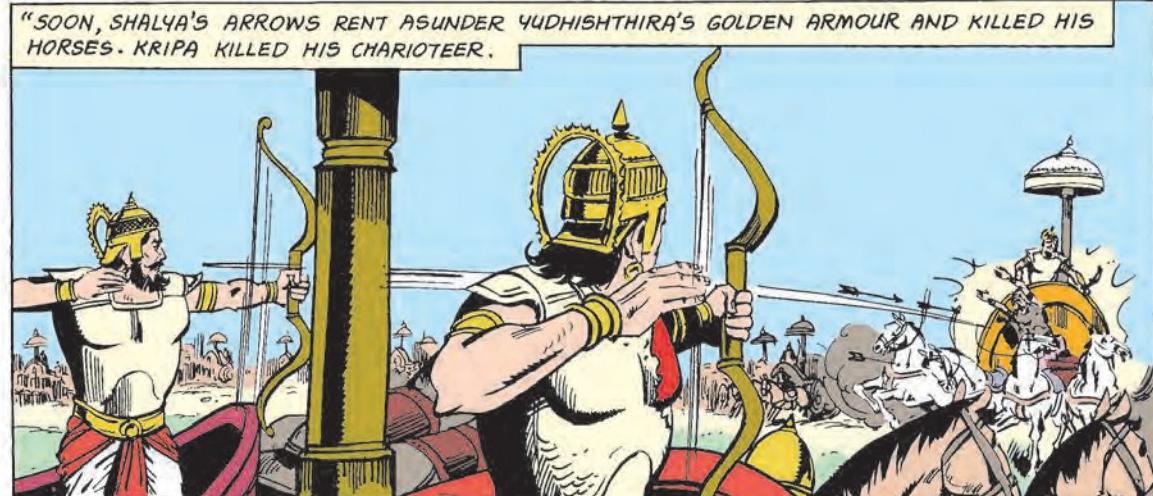
"UNDER YUDHISHTHIRA'S ATTACK SHALYA BECAME UNCONSCIOUS. HOWEVER, HE QUICKLY RECOVERED AND DISCHARGED A HUNDRED ARROWS AT YUDHISHTHIRA.



"WITH NINE WELL-AIMED ARROWS, YUDHISHTHIRA TORE OFF SHALYA'S ARMOUR. IN RETALIATION, SHALYA BROKE YUDHISHTHIRA'S BOW.



"SOON, SHALYA'S ARROWS RENT ASUNDER YUDHISHTHIRA'S GOLDEN ARMOUR AND KILLED HIS HORSES. KRIPA KILLED HIS CHARIOTEER.



"BHEEMA BEGAN TO HARASS SHALYA. WITH A SINGLE SWIFT ARROW, HE BROKE SHALYA'S BOW AND WITH ANOTHER KILLED THE CHARIOOTEER. SOON THE FOUR HORSES TOO FELL.



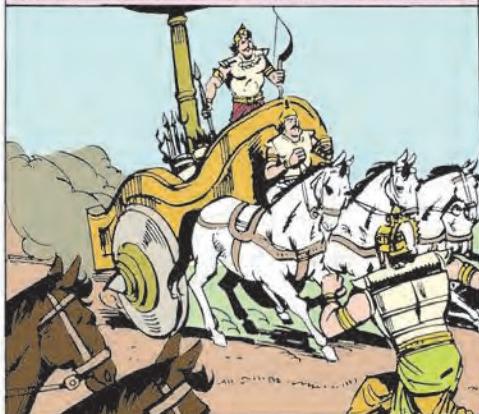
"SHALYA NOW JUMPED DOWN, SWORD IN ONE HAND AND SHIELD IN THE OTHER.



"DHRIKHTADYUMNA, SHIKHANDI AND SATYAKI SURROUNDED SHALYA WHILE BHEEMA BROKE HIS SHIELD TO PIECES AND KNOCKED HIS SWORD OFF.



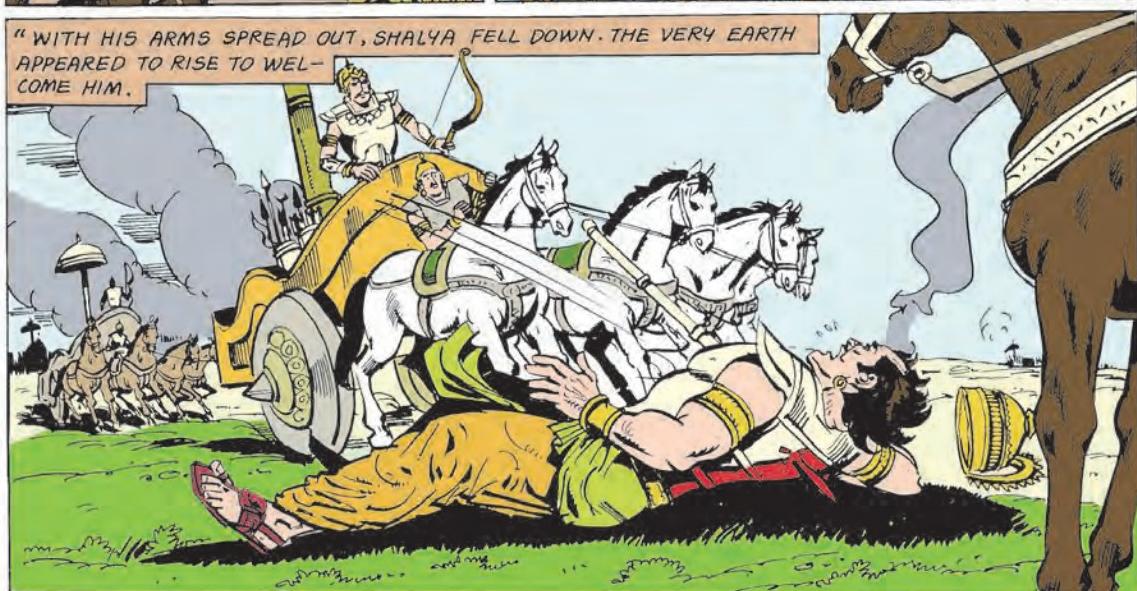
"THE FRIGHTENED KAURAVA SOLDIERS RAN PELL-MELL IN ALL DIRECTIONS. SHALYA CHARGED TOWARDS YUDHISHTHIRA.



"YUDHISHTHIRA PICKED UP A FIERCE LOOKING GOLDEN JAVELIN, STUDDED WITH GEMS, AND THREW IT AT SHALYA'S BROAD CHEST.



"WITH HIS ARMS SPREAD OUT, SHALYA FELL DOWN. THE VERY EARTH APPEARED TO RISE TO WELCOME HIM.



THE KURUS ROUTED

"IN HIS WARLIKE FERVOUR YUDHISHTHIRA CONTINUED TO ATTACK THE KAURAVA ARMY.



"SHALYA'S ARMY RALLIED TOGETHER TO ATTACK THE PANDAVAS.



"SHAKUNI ASKED DURYODHANA —

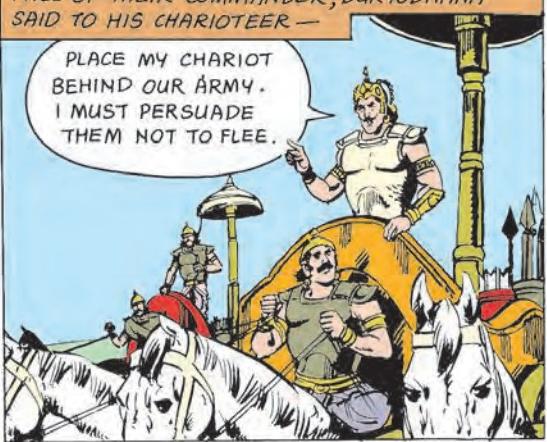
WHY DID YOU ALLOW SHALYA'S ARMY TO ATTACK THE PANDAVAS? HAD WE NOT ALL DECIDED TO FIGHT IN UNISON?

I DID TRY, BUT THEY DID NOT HEED ME. LOOK NOW, THEY HAVE ALL FALLEN AND LIE DEAD.



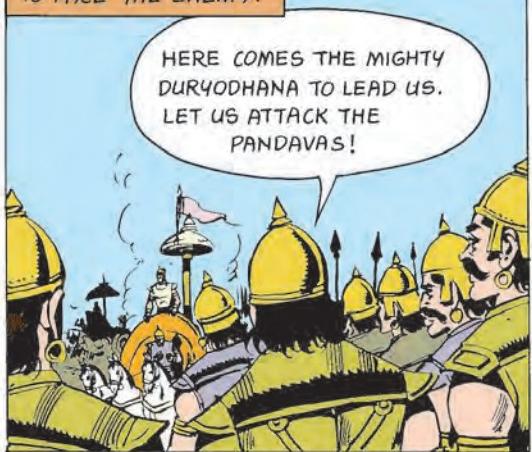
"SEEING HIS ARMY DEMORALISED BY THE FALL OF THEIR COMMANDER, DURYODHANA SAID TO HIS CHARIOTEER —

PLACE MY CHARIOT BEHIND OUR ARMY. I MUST PERSUADE THEM NOT TO FLEE.



"SEEING DURYODHANA TAKING CHARGE, TWENTY ONE THOUSAND KAURAVA SOLDIERS WERE INFUSED WITH CONFIDENCE AGAIN TO FACE THE ENEMY.

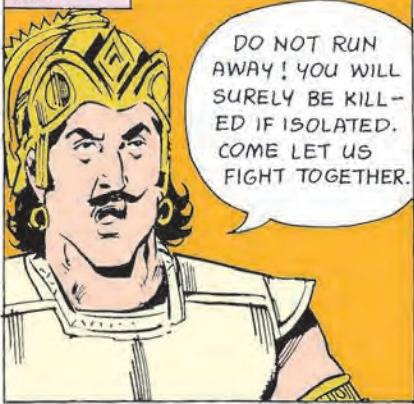
HERE COMES THE MIGHTY DURYODHANA TO LEAD US. LET US ATTACK THE PANDAVAS!



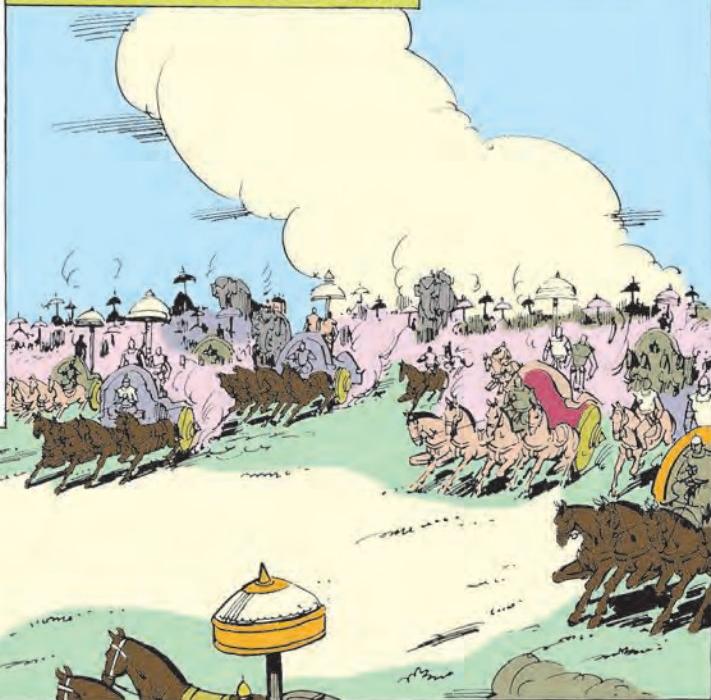
"BHEEMA SAW THE ROARING MASS APPROACHING, AND QUICKLY DESCENDED FROM HIS CHARIOT. WITH HIS MACE, HE SOON MANAGED TO KILL MOST OF THEM.



"THE KAURAVA KINGS TOO BEGAN TO FLEE. DURYODHANA CALLED OUT—

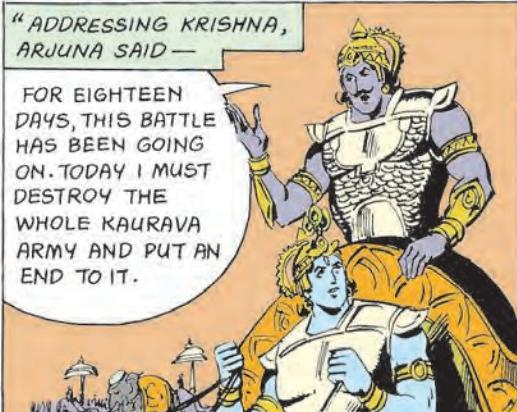


"PERSUDED BY DURYODHANA, THE KAURAVA KINGS PREPARED TO FACE THE ENEMY.



"ADDRESSING KRISHNA, ARJUNA SAID—

FOR EIGHTEEN DAYS, THIS BATTLE HAS BEEN GOING ON. TODAY I MUST DESTROY THE WHOLE KAURAVA ARMY AND PUT AN END TO IT.



"SOON, THE ARROWS, EMERGING IN A RAPID VOLLEY FROM THE GANDEEVA, COVERED THE ENTIRE BATTLEFIELD.



"TORTURED BY ARJUNA'S ARROWS, THE KAURAVA SOLDIERS WERE AGAIN READY TO FLEE."

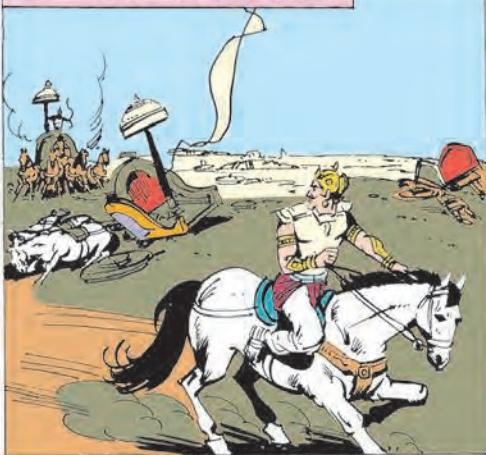


"DURYODHANA TRIED TO REPEL DHRISHTADYUMNA WHO WAS ATTACKING THE ARMY."

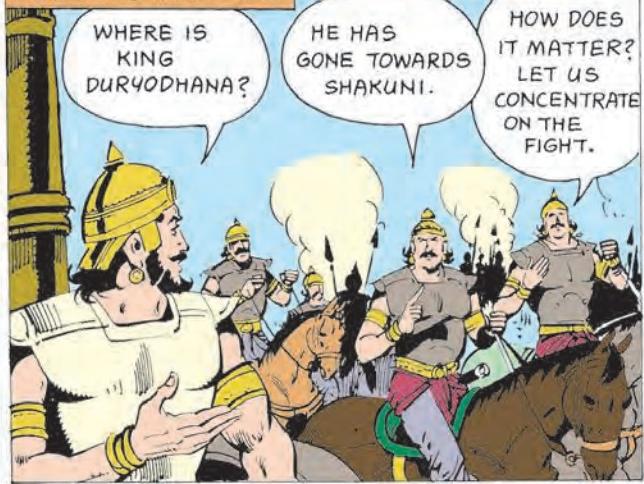


THE KURUS ROUTED

"WHEN DHRISHTADYUMNA KILLED HIS HORSES AND CHARIOTEER, DURYODHANA RODE AWAY ON HORSEBACK."

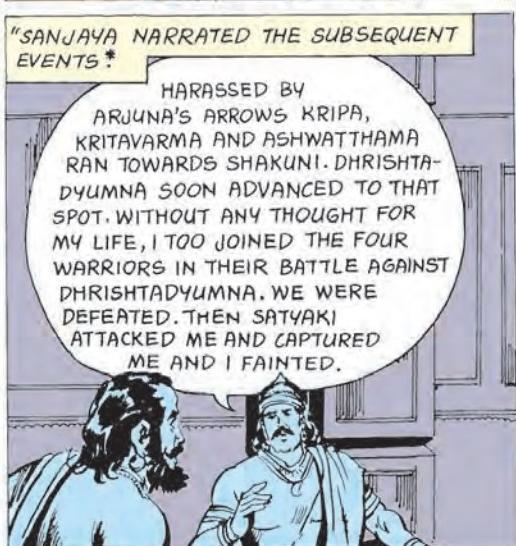


"ASHWATTHAMA, KRIPACHARYA AND KRITAVARMA NOTED HIS ABSENCE."



"SANJAYA NARRATED THE SUBSEQUENT EVENTS\*"

HARASSED BY ARJUNA'S ARROWS KRIPA, KRITAVARMA AND ASHWATTHAMA RAN TOWARDS SHAKUNI. DHRISHTADYUMNA SOON ADVANCED TO THAT SPOT. WITHOUT ANY THOUGHT FOR MY LIFE, I TOO JOINED THE FOUR WARRIOR IN THEIR BATTLE AGAINST DHRISHTADYUMNA. WE WERE DEFEATED. THEN SATYAKI ATTACKED ME AND CAPTURED ME AND I FAINTED.



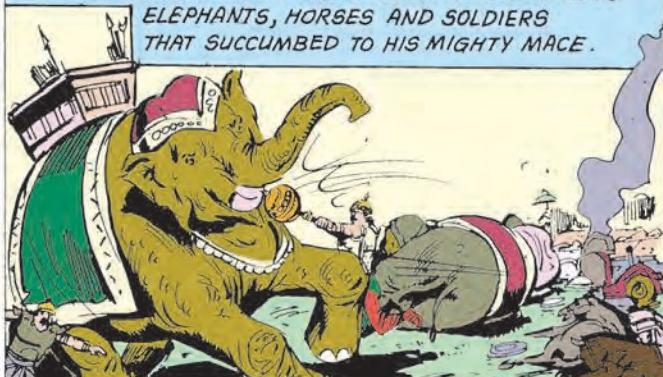
"AFTER DESTROYING OUR ENTIRE ARMY OF ELEPHANTS, BHEEMA ATTACKED DURYODHANA'S BROTHERS."



"UNITED THEY TRIED TO REPEL HIS ATTACK, BUT SOON THEY WERE STRUCK DOWN BY HIS ARROWS AND FELL LIKE TREES UPROOTED ON A MOUNTAINSIDE IN A STRONG GALE."



"ON THIS EIGHTEENTH DAY OF THE TERRIBLE WAR, BHEEMA WAS IN HIS ELEMENT. AFTER PUTTING TO DEATH ALMOST ALL OF THE KAURAVA BROTHERS, HE TURNED TO THE REST OF THE ENEMY ARMY. SOON THE BATTLEFIELD AROUND HIM WAS STREWN WITH THE BODIES OF COUNTLESS ELEPHANTS, HORSES AND SOLDIERS THAT SUCCUMBED TO HIS MIGHTY MACE."



\* SANJAY MIGHT HAVE NARRATED THIS AFTER THE DAY'S BATTLE

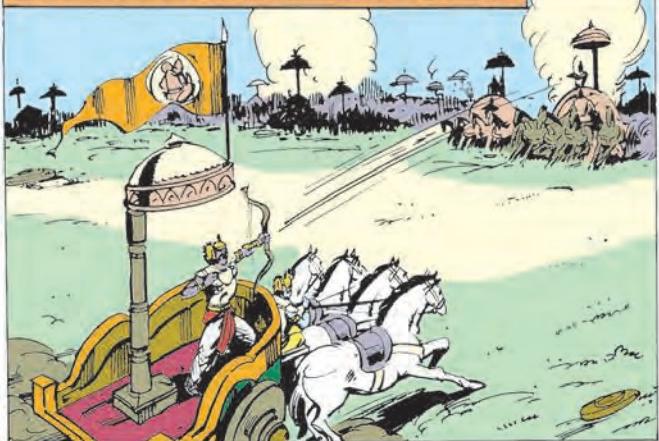
"KRISHNA SAID TO ARJUNA —

BHEM  
DURVO-  
DHANA AND  
SUDARSHANA  
AMIDST THE  
HORSEMEN.  
KILL THEM!

O, KRISHNA,  
ONLY THESE TWO  
REMAIN OF ALL  
DHRITARASHTRA'S  
SONS. THEY TOO  
WILL DIE TODAY;  
REST ASSUR-  
ED.



"ARJUNA THEN ATTACKED THE TRIGARTA ARMY, WHICH HAD BEEN HARASSING HIM ALL THESE DAYS.



"AT LAST HE KILLED SUSHARMA,  
THUS ENDING THE TRIGARTA  
SAGA.

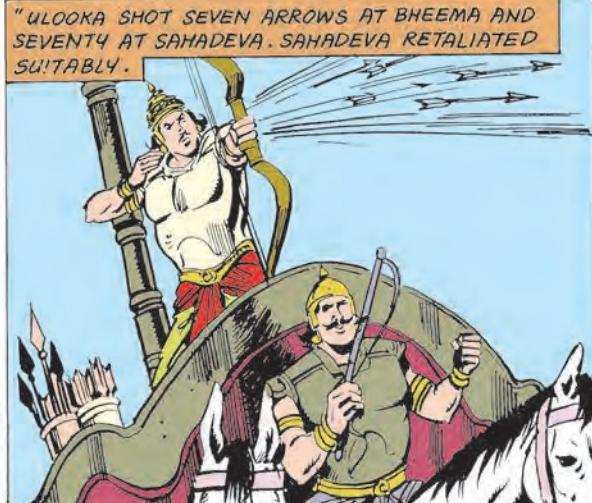
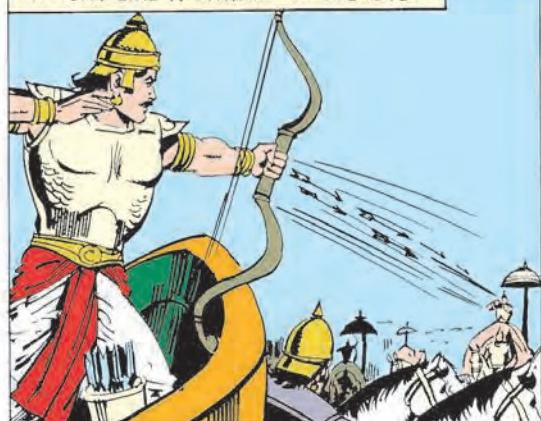
"BHEEMA KILLED SUDAR-  
SHANA WITH SHARP  
ARROWS. DURVODHANA  
ALONE REMAINED AMONG  
THE KAURAVA BROTHERS.

"SHAKUNI AND HIS SON ULOOKA  
ATTACKED BHEEMA AND SAHADEVA.



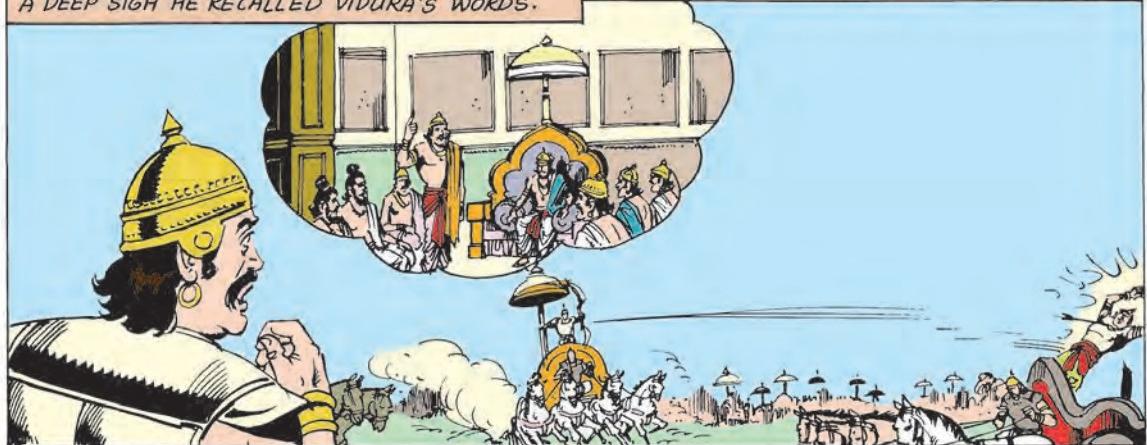
"SO NUMEROUS WERE THE ARROWS SENT BY  
SAHADEVA IN RESPONSE THAT THEY COVERED  
THE SKY LIKE A SWARM OF LOCUSTS.

"ULOOKA SHOT SEVEN ARROWS AT BHEEMA AND  
SEVENTY AT SAHADEVA. SAHADEVA RETALIATED  
SUITABLY.



THE KURUS ROUTED

"HE BEHEADED ULOOKA WITH HIS SPEAR. SHAKUNI'S EYES BRIMMED OVER WITH TEARS. WITH A DEEP SIGH HE RECALLED VIDURA'S WORDS.



"AN ENRAGED SHAKUNI ATTACKED SAHADEVA WITH VARIOUS WEAPONS, BUT HIS ATTEMPTS WERE OF NO AVAIL.

"HIS DAGGER WAS CUT—



"HIS BOW WAS BROKEN—



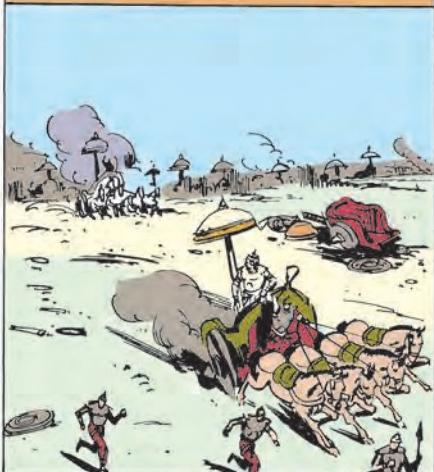
"HIS MACE WAS FELLED—



"AND HIS SPEAR FELL LIKE LIGHTNING FROM THE SKY.

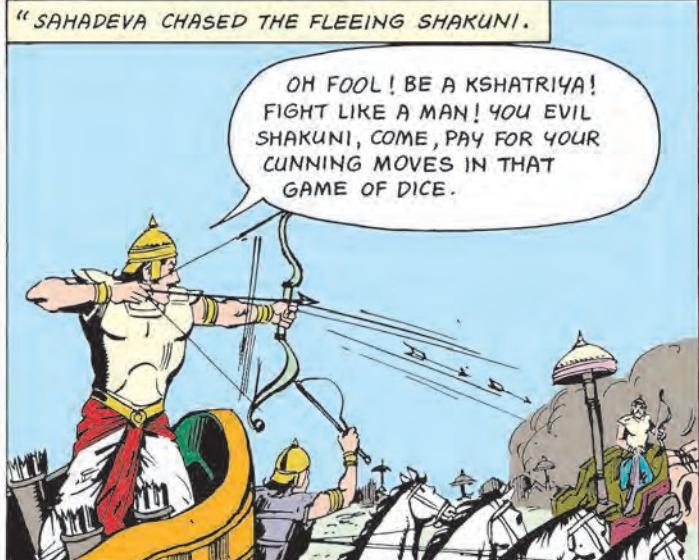


"FILLED WITH FEAR, SHAKUNI AND HIS MEN RAN AWAY. THE PANDAVAS REJOICED IN THEIR VICTORY.



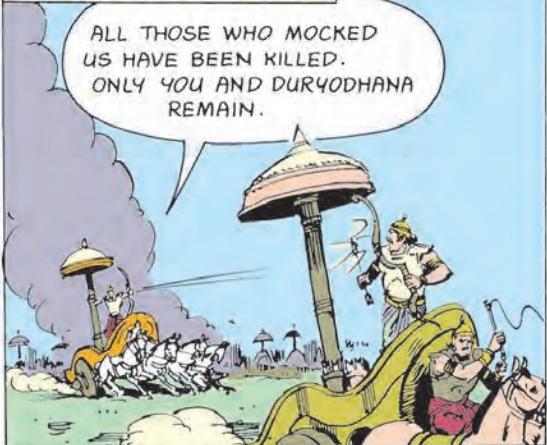
"SAHADEVA CHASED THE FLEEING SHAKUNI.

OH FOOL! BE A KSHATRIYA!  
FIGHT LIKE A MAN! YOU EVIL  
SHAKUNI, COME, PAY FOR YOUR  
CUNNING MOVES IN THAT  
GAME OF DICE.



"SAHADEVA CONTINUED TO RAIN ARROWS AND TAUNTS AT SHAKUNI.

ALL THOSE WHO MOCKED US HAVE BEEN KILLED.  
ONLY YOU AND DURYODHANA REMAIN.



"THEN WITH A VICIOUS-LOOKING IRON SPEAR, BEDECKED WITH GOLDEN FEATHERS, SAHADEVA BEHEADED SHAKUNI.



"DRY-MOUTHED WITH TERROR, THE KAURAVA WARRIOR BEGAN TO RUN AWAY. THE PANDAVA SOLDIERS CHEERED SAHADEVA.

BRAVO! YOU HAVE KILLED THE WICKED SHAKUNI AND HIS SON IN BATTLE.



"ONCE AGAIN DURYODHANA PERSUADED HIS SOLDIERS TO RETURN, BUT THEY COULD NOT FACE THEIR FOES FOR LONG.

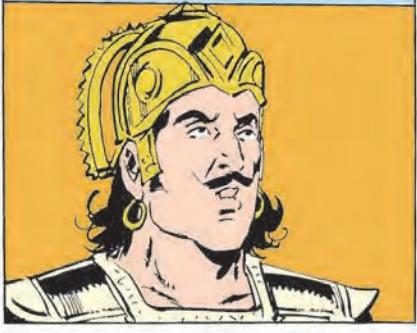


SOON THE KAURAVA FORCES WERE COMPLETELY DESTROYED. OF AN ARMY OF ELEVEN AKSHAUHINIS, NOT A SINGLE SOLDIER REMAINED.



THE KURUS ROUTED

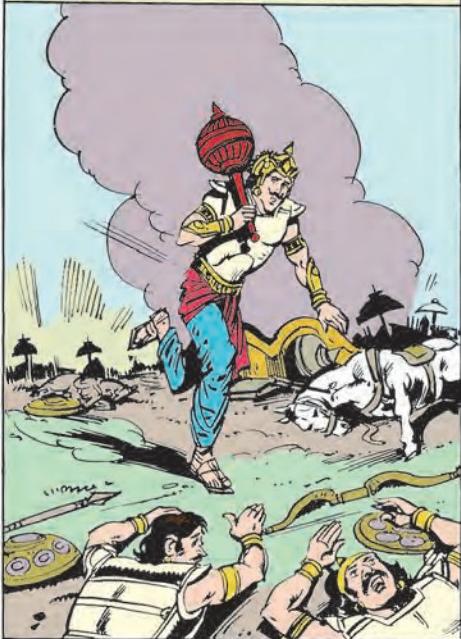
"DURYODHANA STOOD ALONE, WITHOUT AN ARMY OR A CHARIOT, FORLORN AND WOUNDED.



"THERE HE WAS, THE LONE WARRIOR FACING AN ARMY OF TWO THOUSAND CHARIOTS, SEVEN HUNDRED ELEPHANTS, FIVE THOUSAND HORSES AND TEN THOUSAND SOLDIERS WITH DHRISHTADYUMNA IN COMMAND. THE JOYOUS SOUNDS OF CELEBRATION REVERBERATED IN HIS EARS.



"WHEN HE LOOKED AROUND, HE SAW THE BATTLEFIELD STREWN WITH HIS FALLEN SOLDIERS. PETRIFIED WITH FEAR, HE TOOK TO HIS HEELS.



"A MIGHTY KING PROTECTED BY ELEVEN AKSHAUHINIS NOW HAD JUST A MACE OVER HIS SHOULDER TO DEFEND HIM. HE RECALLED VIDURA'S WORDS.



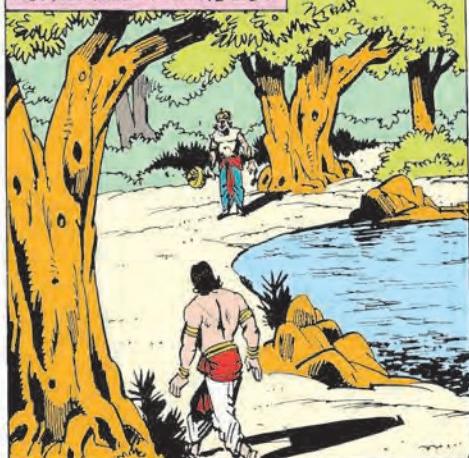
"RUNNING NORTHWARDS, HE CAME UPON A LAKE AND DECIDED TO IMMERSE HIMSELF IN IT.



"MEANWHILE, ON SAGE VYASA'S BIDDING, SATYAKI RELEASED SANJAYA AND LET HIM GO.



"WHILE SANJAYA WAS RETURNING TO THE CITY, HE ESPIED DURYODHANA, ALONE AND WOUNDED.

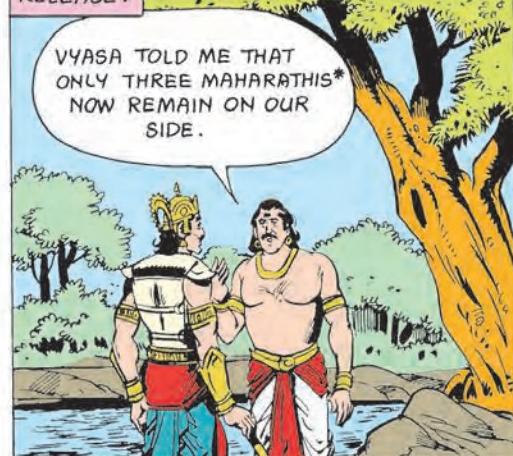


"SANJAYA RECALLED THE SCENE LATER.

I WAS DUMBSTRUCK WITH SHOCK AND SORROW AT HIS STATE. TO SEE A MIGHTY KING, WHOSE POMP AND GLORY WERE ONCE UNRIVALLED, REDUCED TO A PITIABLE CONDITION.

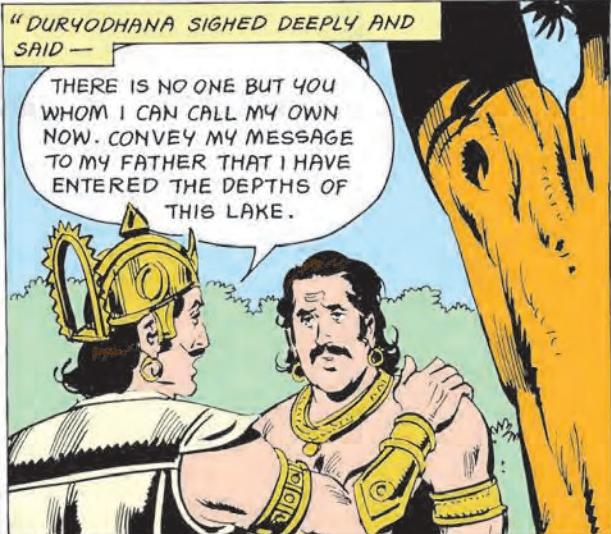


"SANJAYA NARRATED TO DURYODHANA THE TALE OF HIS CAPTURE AND SUBSEQUENT RELEASE.



"DURYODHANA SIGHED DEEPLY AND SAID —

THERE IS NO ONE BUT YOU WHOM I CAN CALL MY OWN NOW. CONVEY MY MESSAGE TO MY FATHER THAT I HAVE ENTERED THE DEPTHS OF THIS LAKE.



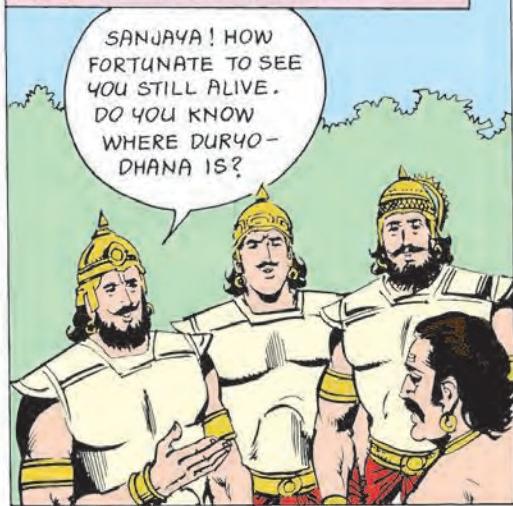
\* THE HIGHEST HONOUR BESTOWED ON A WARRIOR.

THE KURUS ROUTED

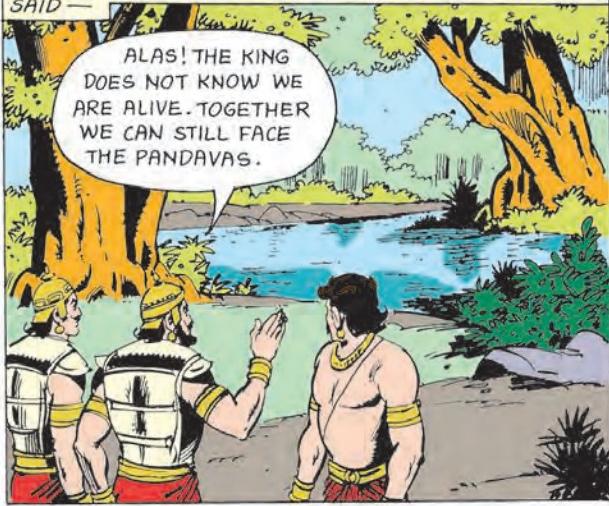
"DURYODHANA THEN ENTERED THE POOL AFTER MAKING THE WATER STAND STILL. JUST THEN, ASHWATTHAMA, KRIPACHARYA AND KRITAVARMA ARRIVED ON THE SCENE."



"WOUNDED AND WEARY, THEY WERE SURPRISED TO SEE SANJAYA."



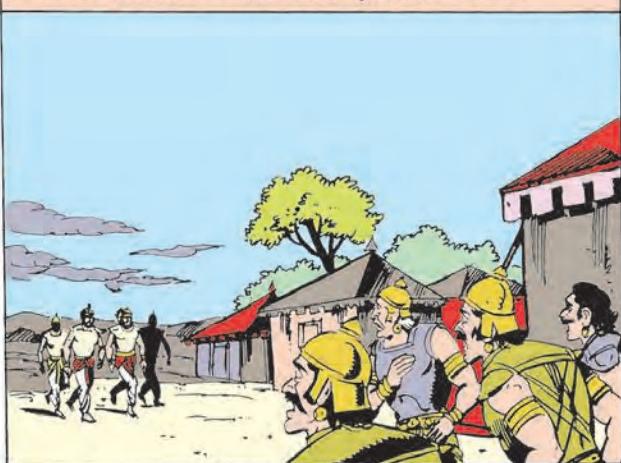
"SANJAYA GAVE THEM DURYODHANA'S MESSAGE. ASHWATTHAMA LOOKED TOWARDS THE LAKE AND SAID —



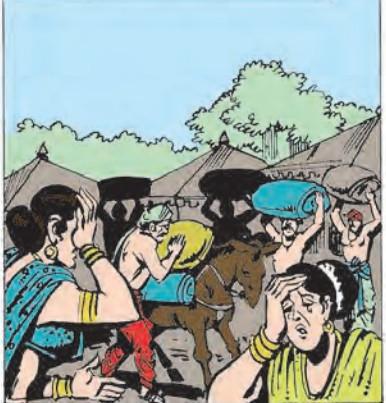
"THE THREE WARRIORS WAITED AWHILE, BEMOANING DURYODHANA'S DECISION. BUT WHEN THEY HEARD THE SOUND OF SOLDIERS APPROACHING, THEY WENT AWAY."



"ALONG WITH SANJAYA, THEY RETURNED TO THE CAMP. ON HEARING THE NEWS OF THE DEFEAT, THE GUARDS, ALREADY SHAKEN WITH WORRY, BROKE DOWN."



"THE OLDER MEN OF THE CAMP, WHO WERE LOOKING AFTER THE LADIES, MADE PREPARATIONS TO RETURN TO HASTINAPURA.



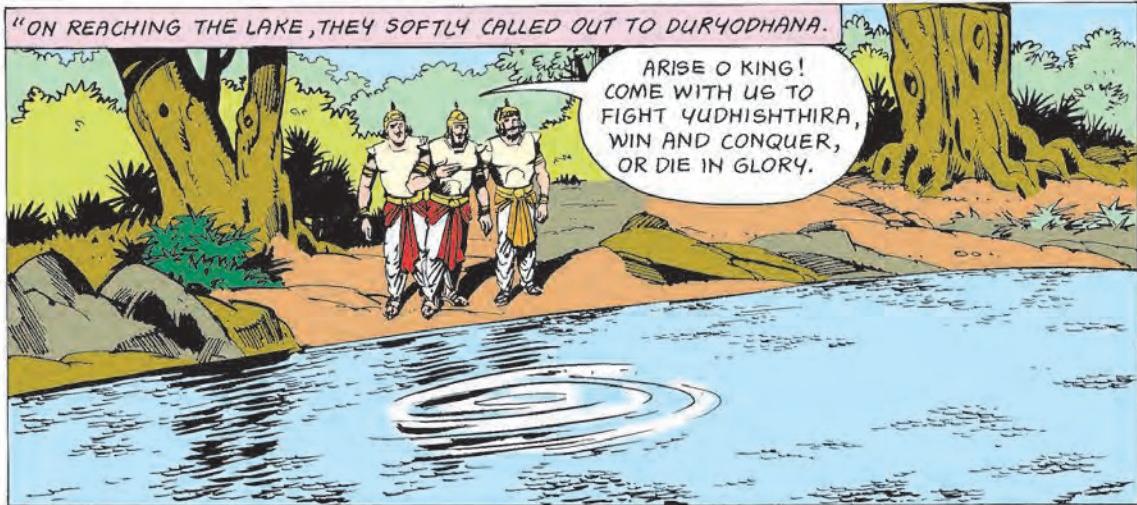
"CRYING AND WAILING, THE WOMEN WERE ESCORTED TO THE CITY BY THE SENTRIES AND THE OLD MINISTERS.



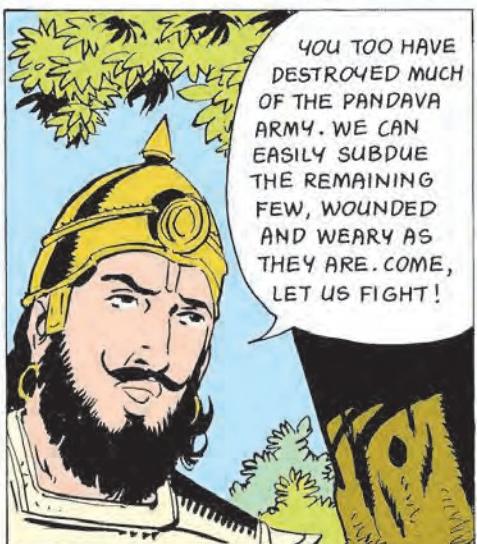
"UNABLE TO BEAR THE LONELINESS OF THE DESERTED CAMP, ASHWATTHAMA, KRIPA AND KRITAVARMA RETURNED TO THE LAKE SIDE.



"ON REACHING THE LAKE, THEY SOFTLY CALLED OUT TO DURYODHANA.

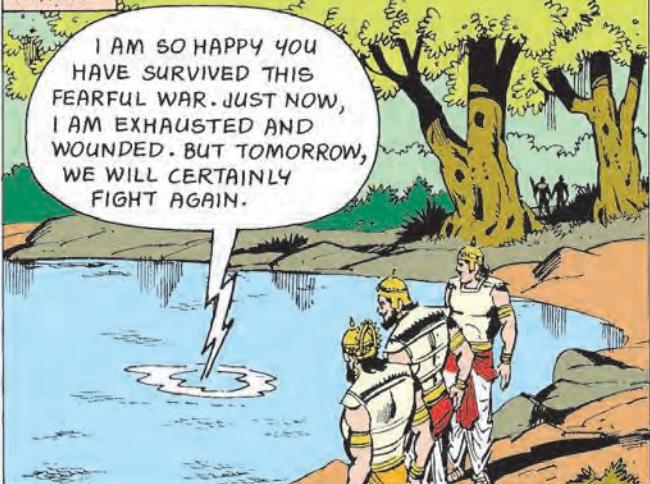


ARISE O KING!  
COME WITH US TO  
FIGHT YUDHISHTHIRA,  
WIN AND CONQUER,  
OR DIE IN GLORY.



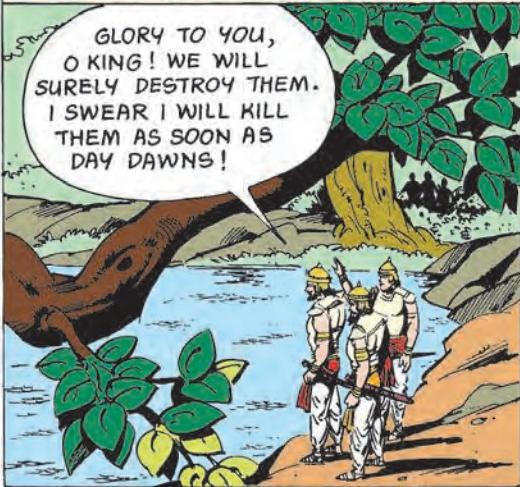
"DURYODHANA'S VOICE WAS HEARD FROM UNDER THE WATER.

I AM SO HAPPY YOU HAVE SURVIVED THIS FEARFUL WAR. JUST NOW, I AM EXHAUSTED AND WOUNDED. BUT TOMORROW, WE WILL CERTAINLY FIGHT AGAIN.

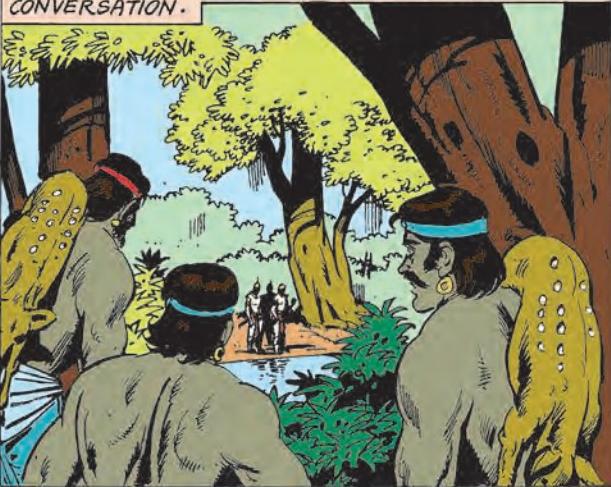


THE KURUS ROUTED

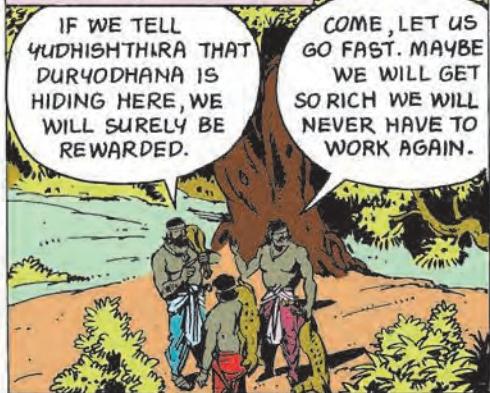
"DELIGHTED AT DURYODHANA'S DECISION TO FIGHT, ASHWATTHAMA DECLARED —



"SOME HUNTERS WHO HAPPENED TO COME TO THE LAKE TO QUENCH THEIR THIRST OVERHEARD THE CONVERSATION.



"THEY CONCLUDED THAT DURYODHANA WAS HIDDEN IN THE LAKE AND WAS BEING INVITED TO FIGHT AGAIN. TALKING IN WHISPERS, THEY SAID —



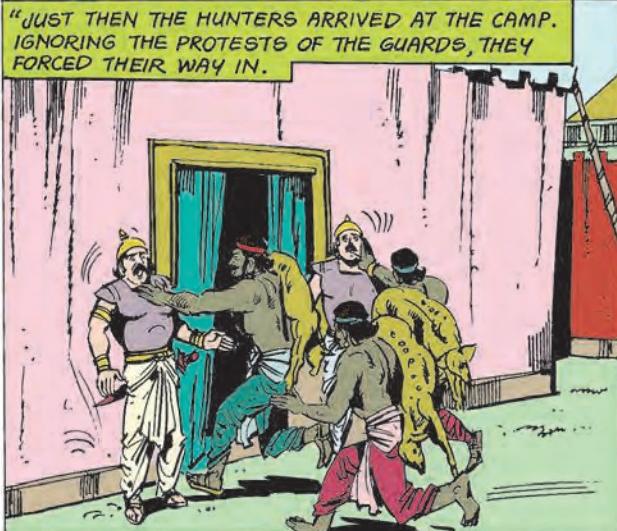
"MEANWHILE, YUDHISHTHIRA REALISED THAT DURYODHANA WAS MISSING AND SENT HIS SPIES IN ALL DIRECTIONS.



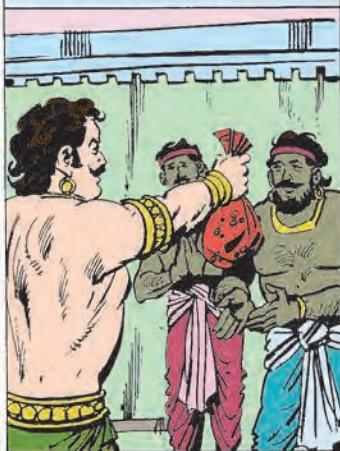
"WHEN THEY RETURNED WITHOUT ANY CLUE OF DURYODHANA'S WHEREABOUTS, YUDHISHTHIRA WAS WORRIED INDEED.



"JUST THEN THE HUNTERS ARRIVED AT THE CAMP. IGNORING THE PROTESTS OF THE GUARDS, THEY FORCED THEIR WAY IN.

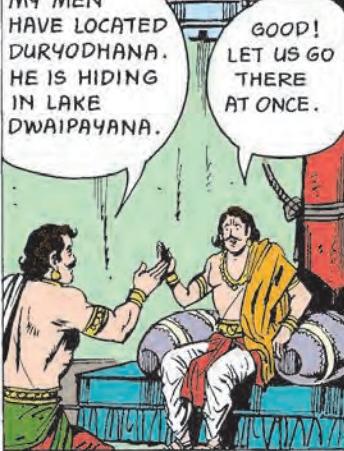


"THEY NARRATED THE EVENTS AT THE LAKESIDE TO BHEEMA WHO REWARDED THEM HANDSOMELY.



"BHEEMA WENT OVER TO YUDHISHTHIRA AND SAID—

MY MEN HAVE LOCATED DURYODHANA. HE IS HIDING IN LAKE DWAIPAYANA.

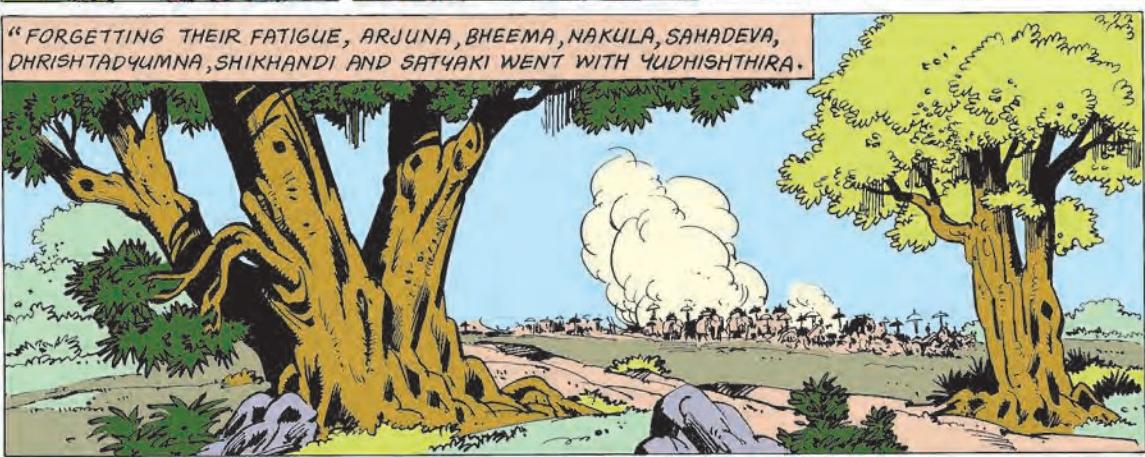


"WITH KRISHNA IN THE LEAD, THE PANDAVAS PROCEEDED TO DWAIPAYANA.

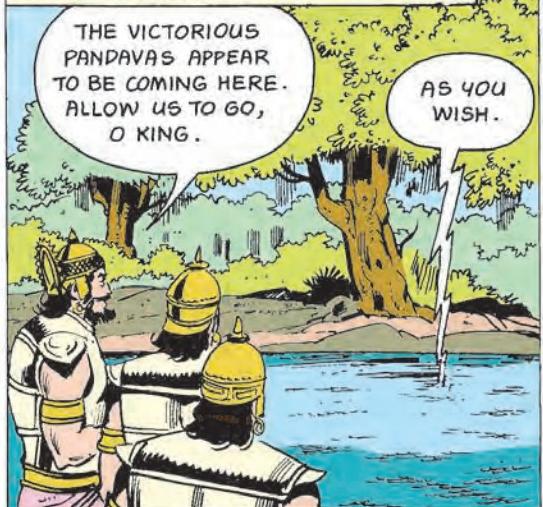
DURYODHANA HAS BEEN FOUND!



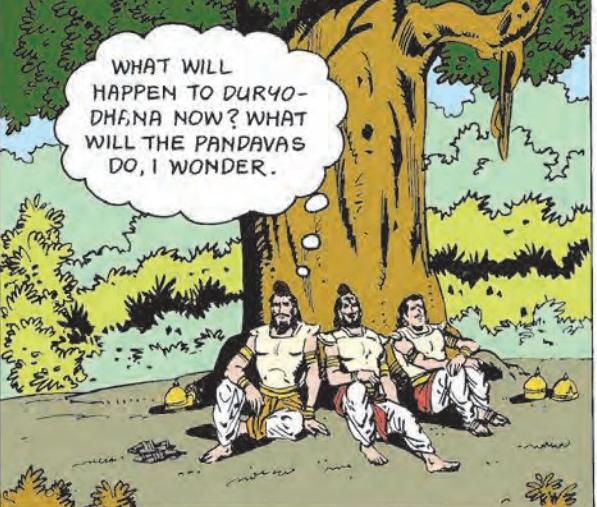
"FORGETTING THEIR FATIGUE, ARJUNA, BHEEMA, NAKULA, SAHADEVA, DHRISHTADYUMNA, SHIKHANDI AND SATYAKI WENT WITH YUDHISHTHIRA.



"WHEN THE SOUND OF APPROACHING ARMY REACHED THEIR EARS, ASHWATTHAMA, KRIPA AND KRITAVARMA TOLD DURYODHANA—

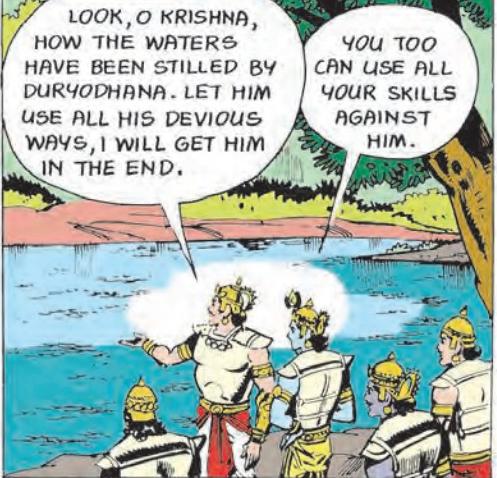


"THE THREE WARRIOR'S MOVED AWAY AND RESTED UNDER A BANYAN TREE.

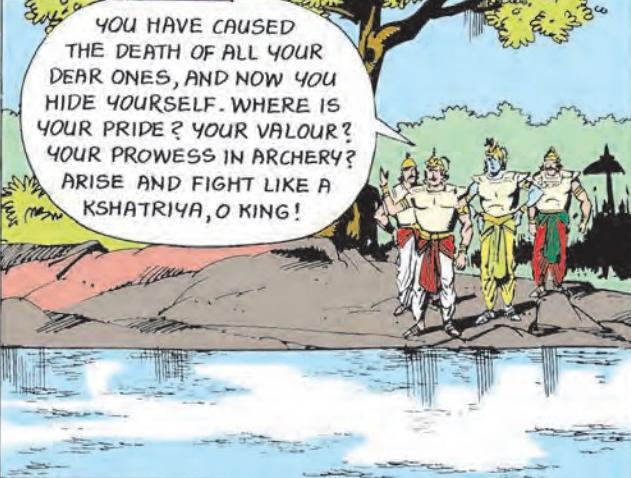


THE KURUS ROUTED

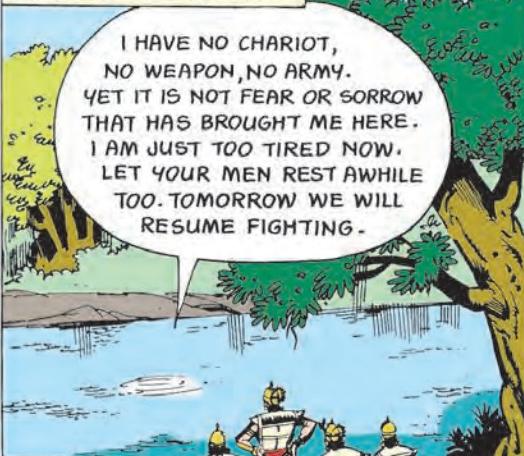
"ON REACHING THE LAKE, YUDHISHTHIRA REMARKED —



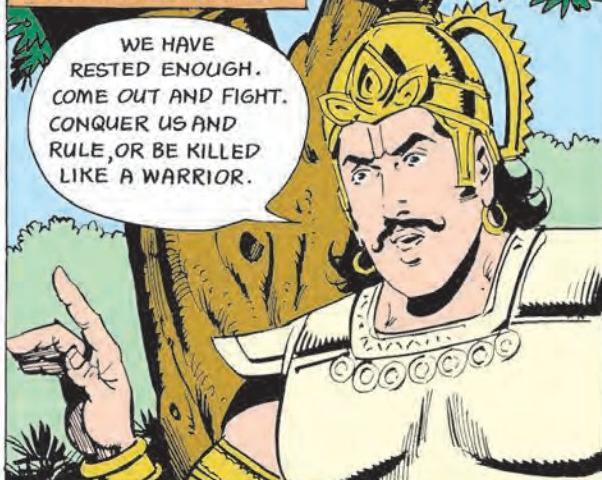
"REASSURED BY KRISHNA, YUDHISHTHIRA CALLED OUT TO DURYODHANA.



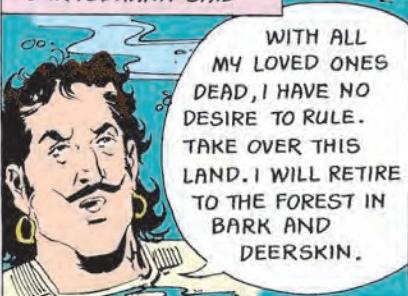
"DURYODHANA RESPONDED FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE WATER —



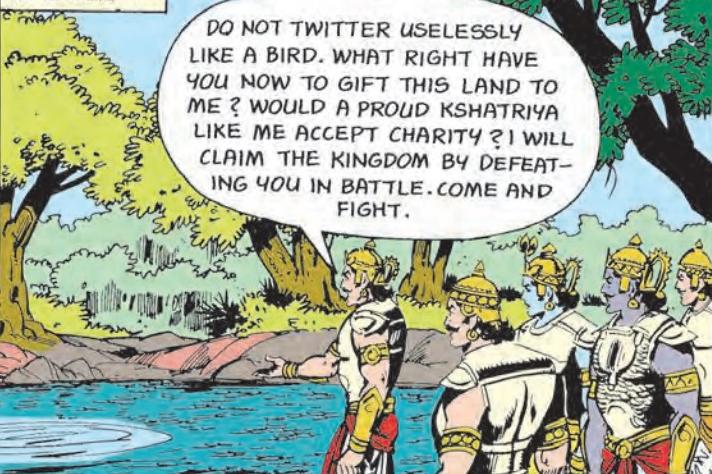
"YUDHISHTHIRA REPLIED —



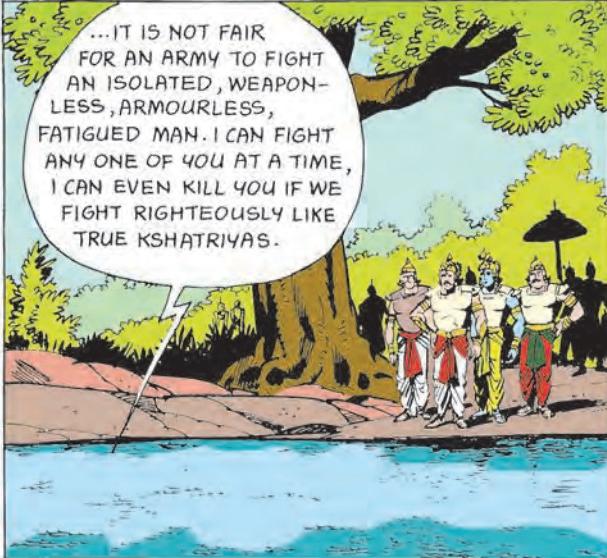
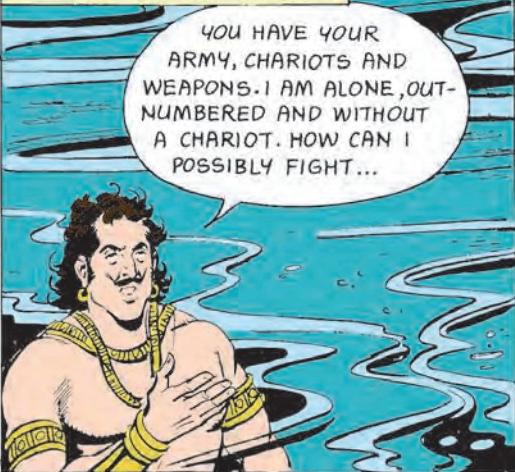
"DURYODHANA SAID —



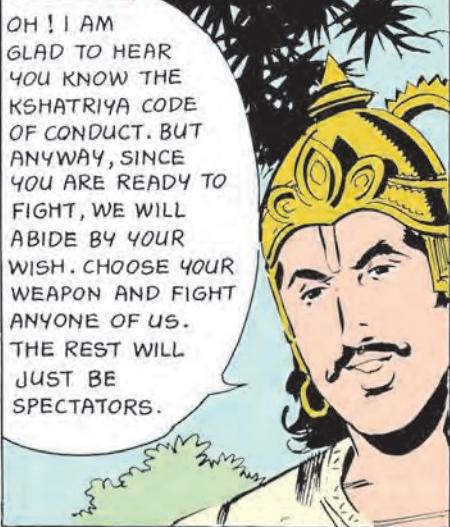
"YUDHISHTHIRA SHOUTED IN ANGER —



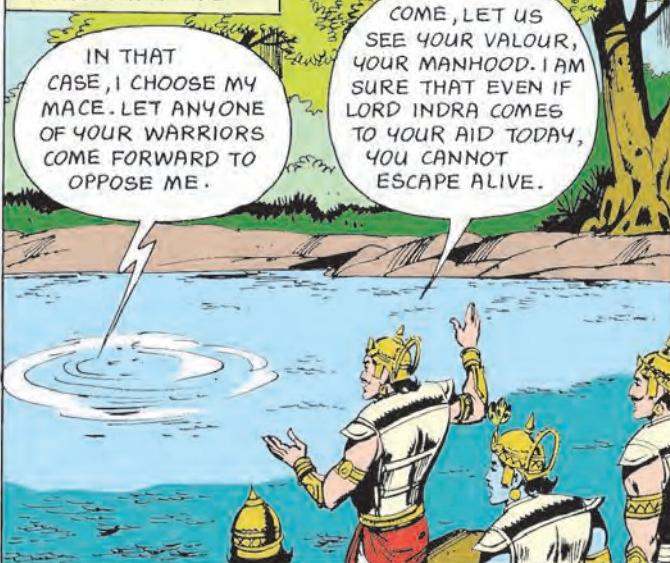
"DURYODHANA FLAILLED AROUND HIS ARMS IN FRUSTRATION, SIGHED REPEATEDLY, BUT REMAINED INSIDE. HE SAID —



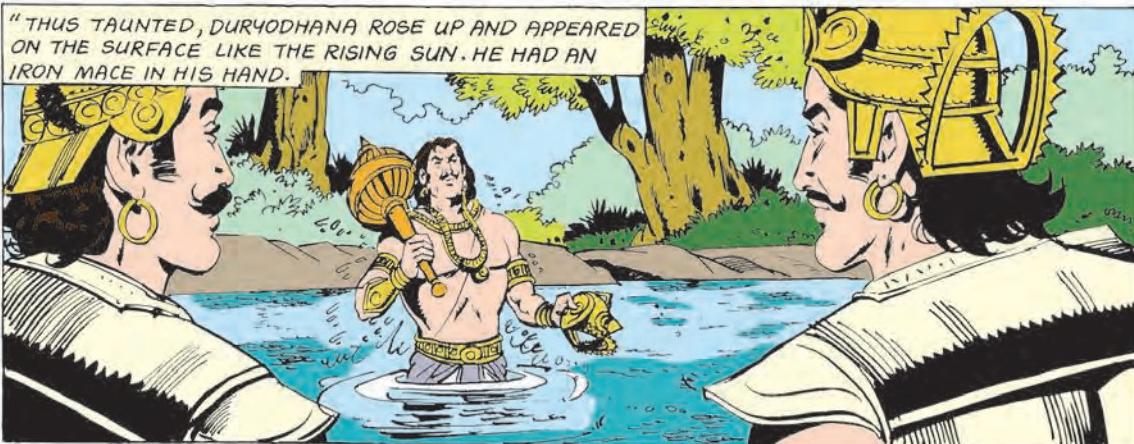
"YUDHISHTHIRA REPLIED SARCASTICALLY —



"DURYODHANA SAID —



"THUS TAUNTED, DURYODHANA ROSE UP AND APPEARED ON THE SURFACE LIKE THE RISING SUN. HE HAD AN IRON MACE IN HIS HAND."



THE KURUS ROUTED

"THRILLED TO SEE DURYODHANA EMERGE AT LAST, THE PANDAVAS REJOICED AND CLASPED ONE ANOTHER'S HANDS.



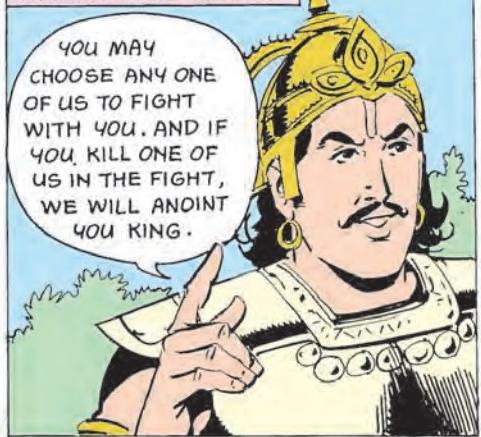
"DURYODHANA DECLARED—

I WILL FIGHT ALL OF YOU BUT ONE AT A TIME. YOU RIGHTEOUS WARRIORS KNOW THE RULES OF CONDUCT.

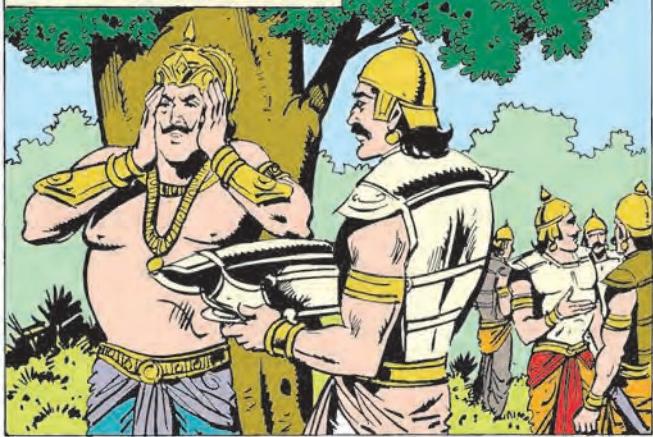
BUT DID YOU NOT KNOW THE RULES OF CONDUCT WHEN YOU SURROUNDED ABHIMANYU? ONLY WHEN THEY FACE A PROBLEM THEMSELVES, DO MEN QUOTE FROM LAW BOOKS.



"YUDHISHTHIRA THEN MADE A MAGNANIMOUS OFFER—



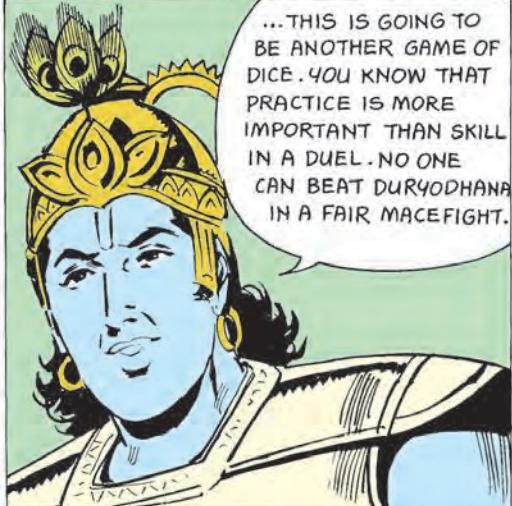
"DURYODHANA PUT ON THE GOLDEN ARMOUR AND THE HEADGEAR OFFERED TO HIM.



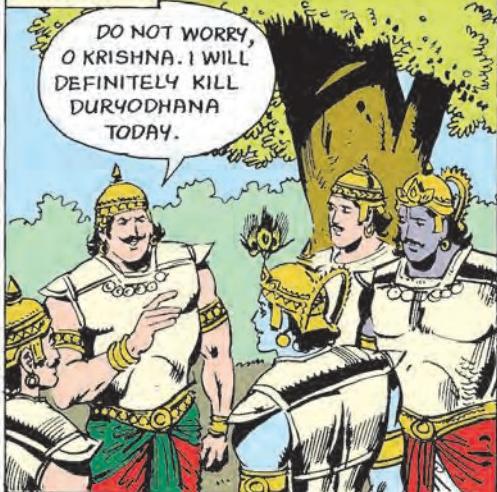
"KRISHNA, WHO HAD BEEN WATCHING SILENTLY FOR A WHILE, SAID TO YUDHISHTHIRA WITH EXTREME ANGER—



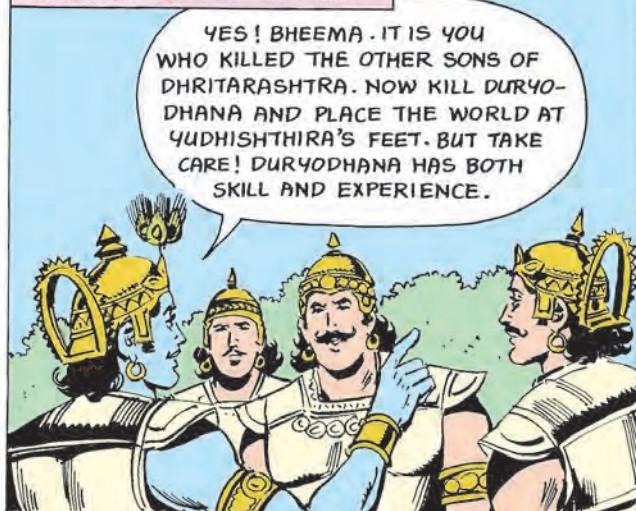
...THIS IS GOING TO BE ANOTHER GAME OF DICE. YOU KNOW THAT PRACTICE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN SKILL IN A DUEL. NO ONE CAN BEAT DURYODHANA IN A FAIR MACEFIGHT.



"BHEEMA CAME FORWARD AND REASSURED KRISHNA —



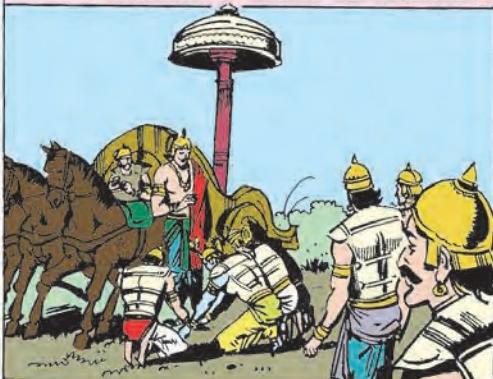
"KRISHNA WAS OVERJOYED.



"BHEEMA WENT UP TO DURYODHANA AND DECLARED —



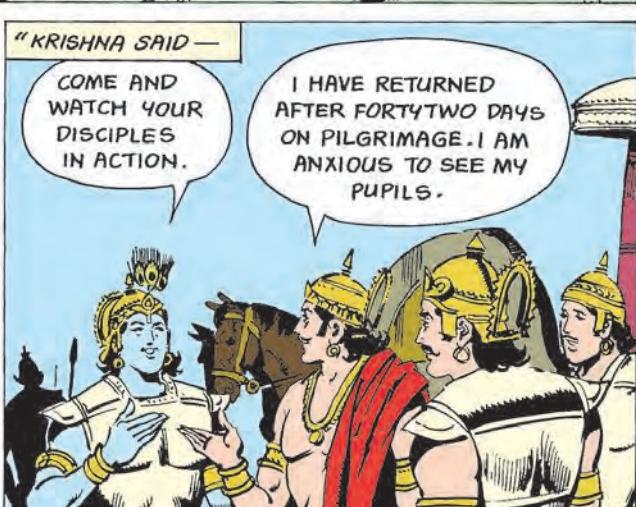
"THE FIGHT WAS ABOUT TO START, WHEN BALARAMA, WHO HAD BEEN AWAY ON A PILGRIMAGE, ARRIVED THERE. KRISHNA AND THE PANDAVAS RUSHED TO GREET HIM.



"KRISHNA SAID —

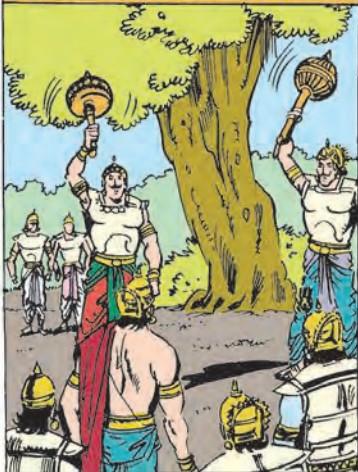
COME AND WATCH YOUR DISCIPLES IN ACTION.

I HAVE RETURNED AFTER FORTYTWO DAYS ON PILGRIMAGE. I AM ANXIOUS TO SEE MY PUPILS.



THE KURUS ROUTED

"BHEEMA AND DURYODHANA RAISED THEIR MACES IN A GREETING TO BALARAMA.



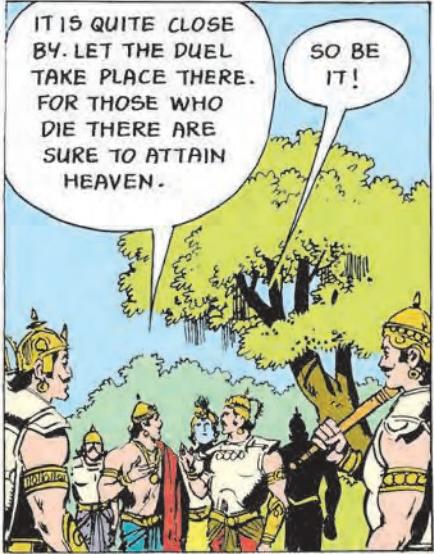
"AFTER DESCRIBING THE PILGRIMAGE AT LENGTH, BALARAMA SAID TO YUDHISHTHIRA.

I HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT SAMANTAPANCHAKA IS THE MOST HOLY SPOT.



IT IS QUITE CLOSE BY. LET THE DUEL TAKE PLACE THERE. FOR THOSE WHO DIE THERE ARE SURE TO ATTAIN HEAVEN.

SO BE IT!



"ALL OF THEM PROCEEDED THERE. DURYODHANA, WITH HIS HEAD HELD HIGH AND MACE ALOFT, WALKED PROUDLY AMONG THE PANDAVAS. SOON THEY REACHED THE BANKS OF THE RIVER SARASWATI. BHEEMA AND DURYODHANA GOT READY FOR THE DUEL.



"LIKE TWO ENRAGED ELEPHANTS, THEY FACED EACH OTHER. TWO HANDSOME MEN, WITH MACES UPRAISED, BENT ON DESTRUCTION.

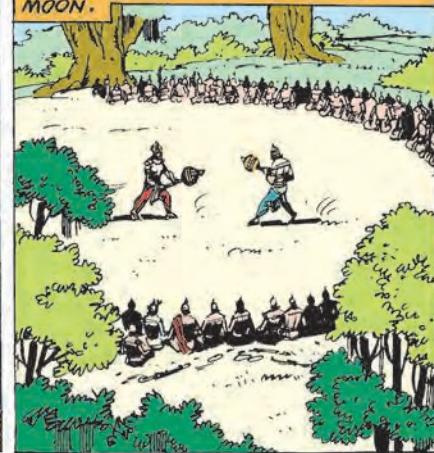


"ADDRESSING YUDHISHTHIRA, DURYODHANA SAID PROUDLY-

BRAVE WARRIOR! SIT NEAR US AND WITNESS THE FIGHT.

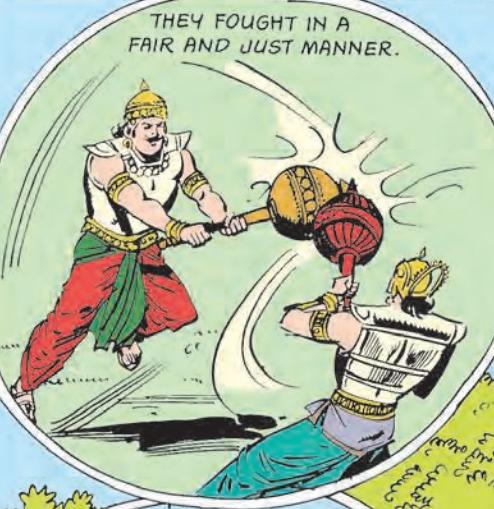


"SO THEY ALL SAT AROUND THE ARENA. THE BLUE-CLAD BALARAMA LOOKED LIKE THE RESPLENDENT MOON.

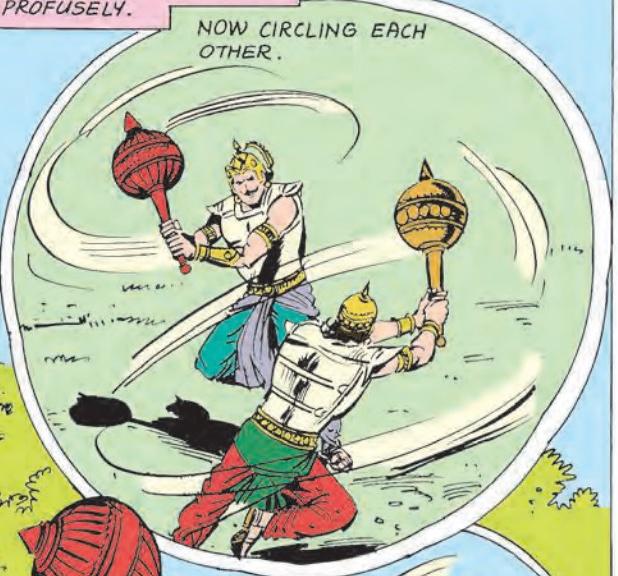


"THE FIGHT WAS FIERCE. SOON WITH MIGHTY BLOWS OF THEIR MACES,  
THEY WERE BOTH WOUNDED AND THEY BLED PROFUSELY."

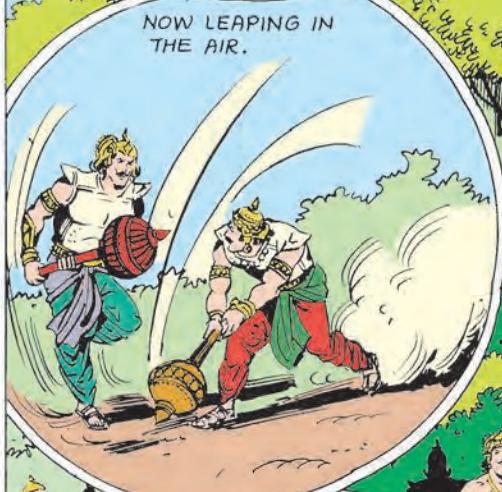
THEY FOUGHT IN A  
FAIR AND JUST MANNER.



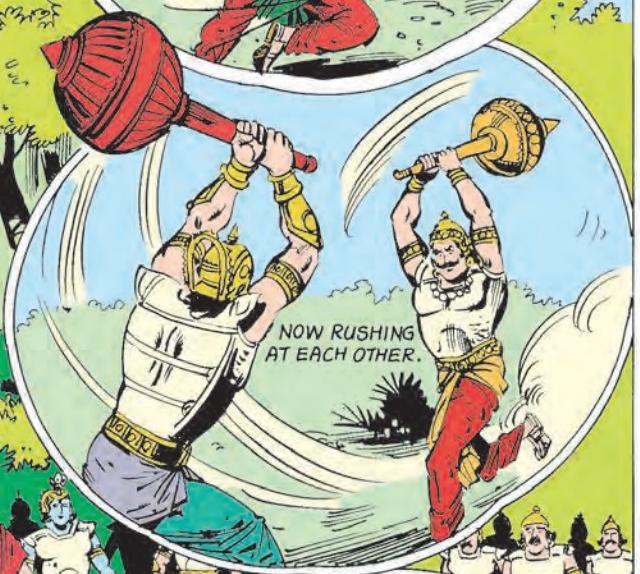
NOW CIRCLING EACH  
OTHER.



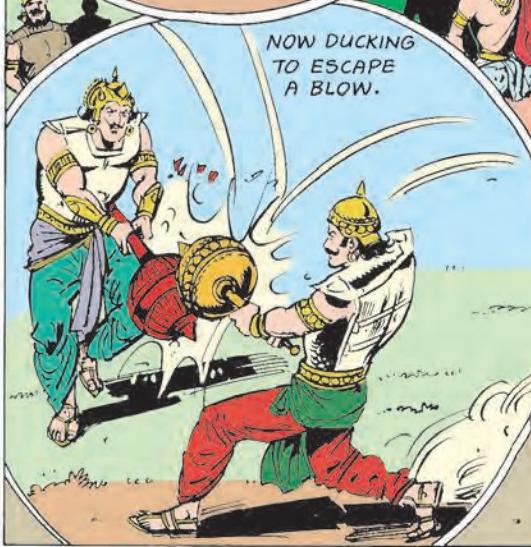
NOW LEAPING IN  
THE AIR.



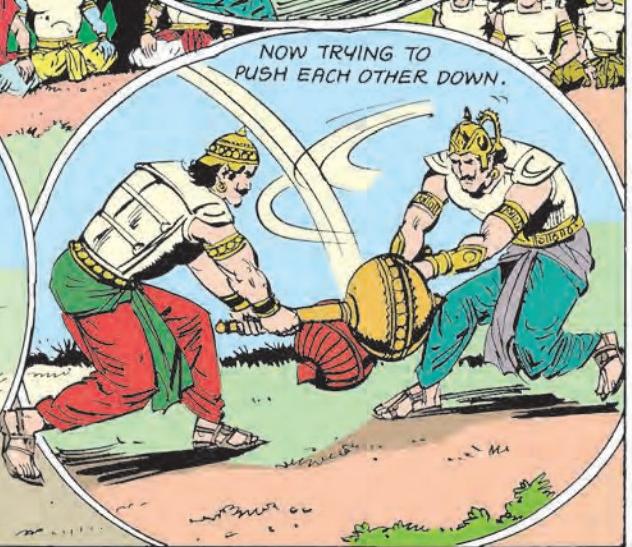
NOW RUSHING  
AT EACH OTHER.



NOW DUCKING  
TO ESCAPE  
A BLOW.



NOW TRYING TO  
PUSH EACH OTHER DOWN.



THE KURUS ROUTED

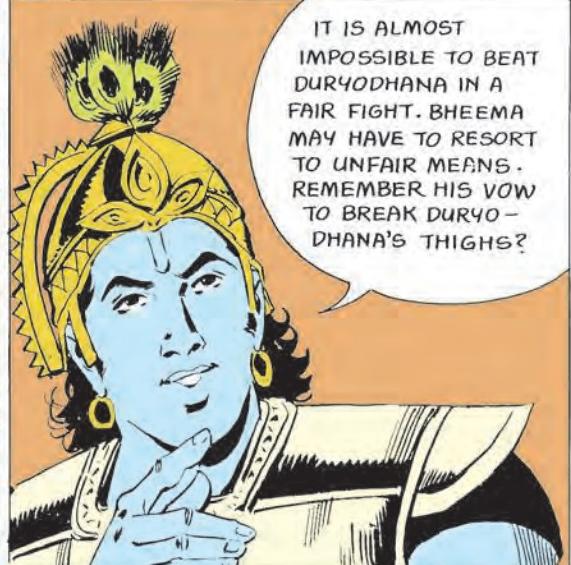
"WHILE BALARAMA PROUDLY WATCHED HIS PUPILS, ARJUNA ASKED KRISHNA ANXIOUSLY.

TELL ME,  
KRISHNA, WHO  
IS THE SUPERIOR  
OF THE TWO?

BOTH OF THEM ARE  
TRAINED BY MY BROTHER  
BALARAMA. BHEEMA IS  
MORE POWERFUL BUT  
DURYODHANA IS FAR  
AHEAD IN SKILL AND  
EXPERIENCE.



IT IS ALMOST  
IMPOSSIBLE TO BEAT  
DURYODHANA IN A  
FAIR FIGHT. BHEEMA  
MAY HAVE TO RESORT  
TO UNFAIR MEANS.  
REMEMBER HIS VOW  
TO BREAK DURYODHANA'S THIGHS?



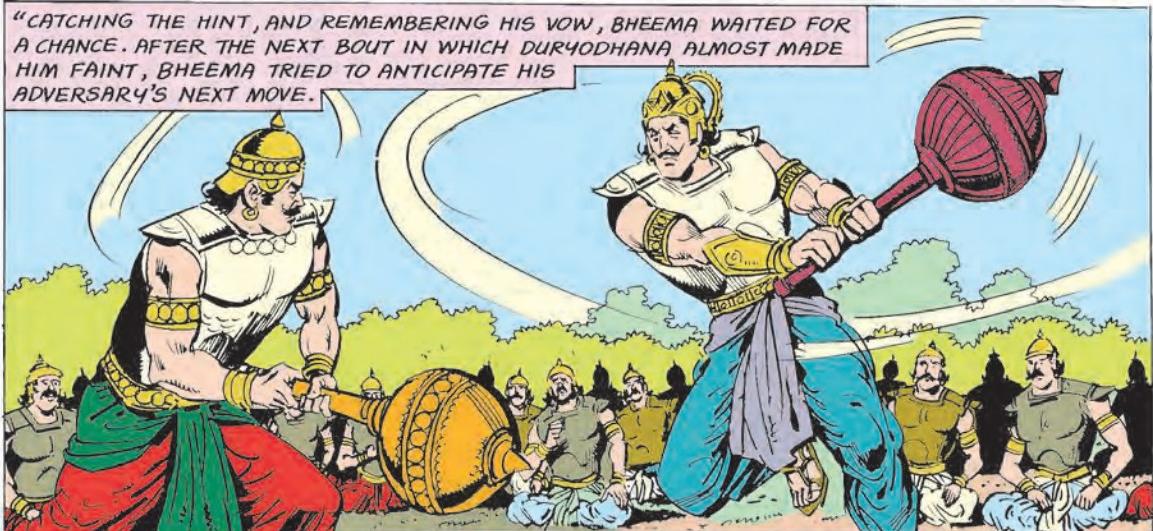
"BHEEMA AND DURYODHANA WERE MEANWHILE  
FIGHTING FIERCELY. DURYODHANA SPRANG UP  
IN THE AIR TO DODGE A BLOW.



"CATCHING BHEEMA'S EYE, ARJUNA MEANING-  
FULLY STRUCK HIS OWN THIGH FORCEFULLY.



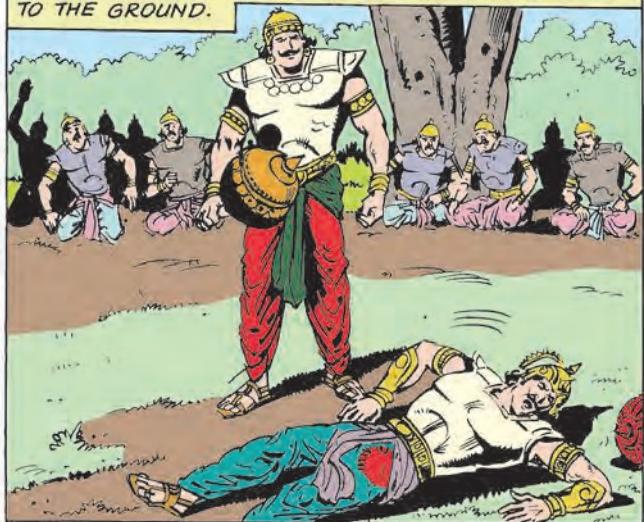
"CATCHING THE HINT, AND REMEMBERING HIS VOW, BHEEMA WAITED FOR  
A CHANCE. AFTER THE NEXT BOUT IN WHICH DURYODHANA ALMOST MADE  
HIM FAINT, BHEEMA TRIED TO ANTICIPATE HIS  
ADVERSARY'S NEXT MOVE.



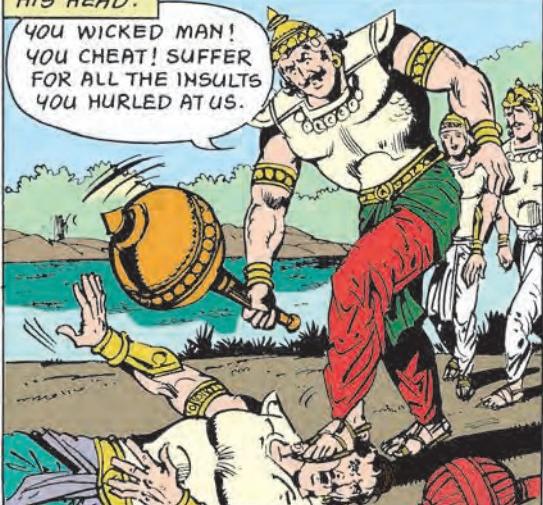
"WHEN DURYODHANA JUMPED UP NEXT TIME, BHEEMA HIT OUT FORCEFULLY AT HIS THIGHS.



"WITH HIS THIGHS BROKEN, DURYODHANA COLLAPSED TO THE GROUND.



"THE ELATED PANDAVAS CAME CLOSER TO SEE THE FALLEN HERO. PROUDLY BHEEMA KICKED DURYODHANA'S CROWN AND PUT HIS FOOT ON HIS HEAD.

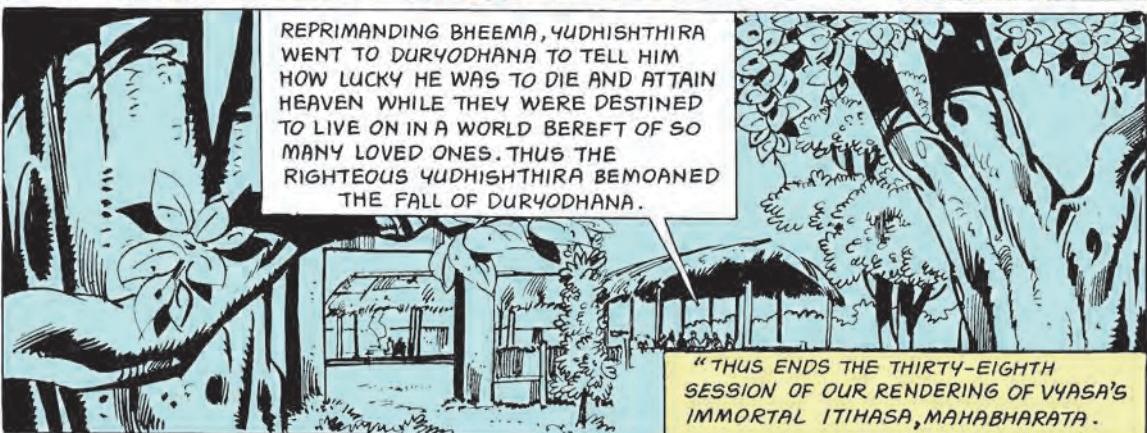


"YUDHISHTHIRA STEPPED FORWARD.

"ENOUGH! BHEEMA. YOU HAVE FULFILLED YOUR VOW. DO NOT INSULT HIM SO. AFTER ALL HE IS OUR BROTHER, A KING AND THE LORD OF ELEVEN AKSHAUHINIS.



REPRIMANDING BHEEMA, YUDHISHTHIRA WENT TO DURYODHANA TO TELL HIM HOW LUCKY HE WAS TO DIE AND ATTAIN HEAVEN WHILE THEY WERE DESTINED TO LIVE ON IN A WORLD BEREFT OF SO MANY LOVED ONES. THUS THE RIGHTEOUS YUDHISHTHIRA BEMOANED THE FALL OF DURYODHANA.

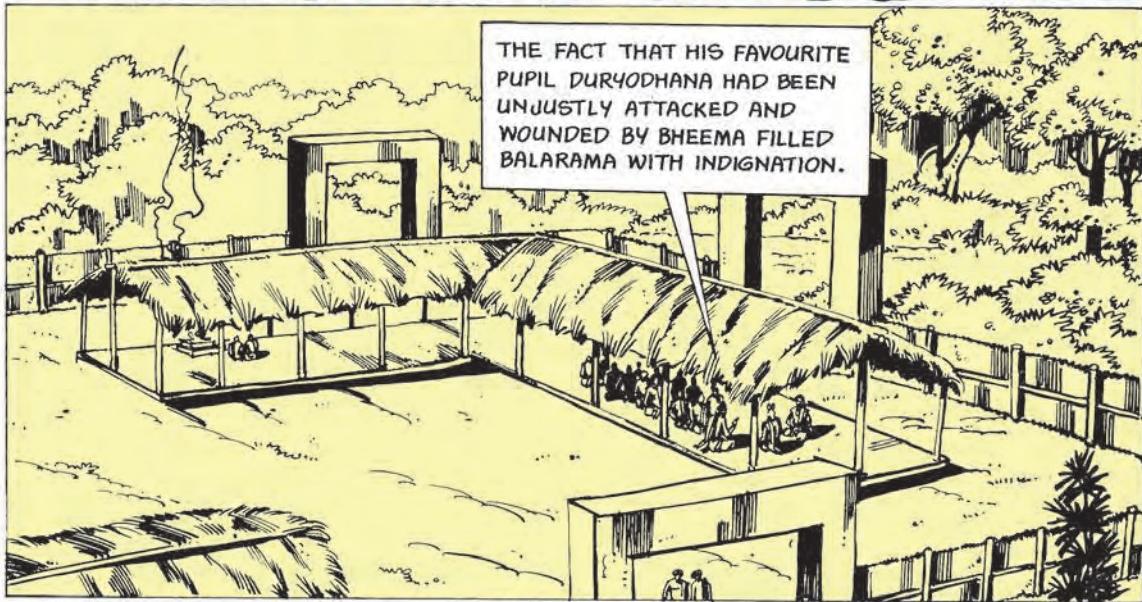


"THUS ENDS THE THIRTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA, MAHABHARATA.

# Mahabharata - 39

AFTER THE WAR

THE FACT THAT HIS FAVOURITE PUPIL DURYODHANA HAD BEEN UNJUSTLY ATTACKED AND WOUNDED BY BHEEMA FILLED BALARAMA WITH INDIGNATION.



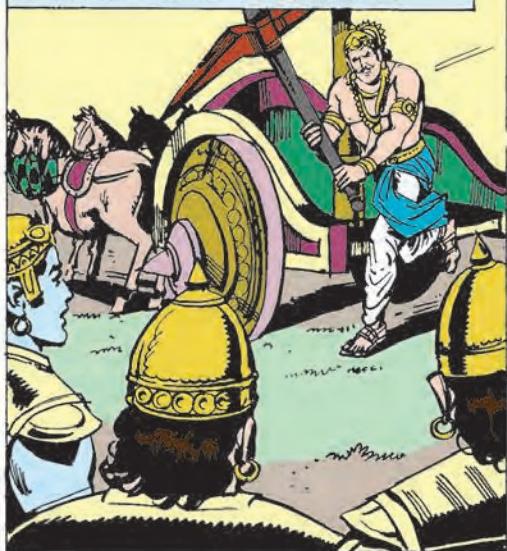
"SHAKING WITH FURY, HE ADDRESSED BHEEMA —

SHAME ON YOU,  
BHEEMA!  
SHAME ON YOU!

HITTING BELOW THE NABEL IS AGAINST THE RULES OF A DUEL WITH MACES. O KRISHNA, DURYODHANA WAS AS STRONG AS I BUT BHEEMA FLOUTED THE RULES OF COMBAT.



"IN HIS RAGE, HE RUSHED AT BHEEMA WITH HIS PLOUGH\* HELD ALOFT.

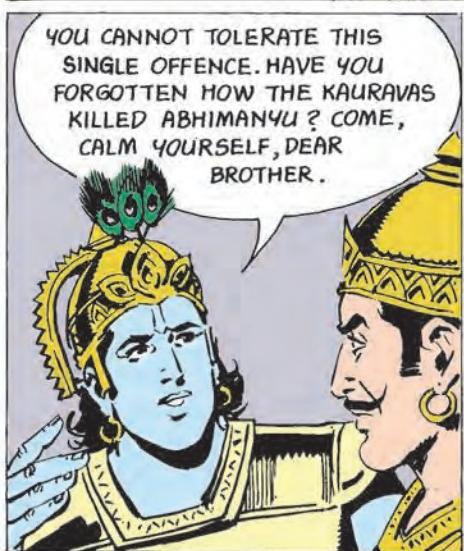


"KRISHNA TRIED TO RESTRAIN HIM.

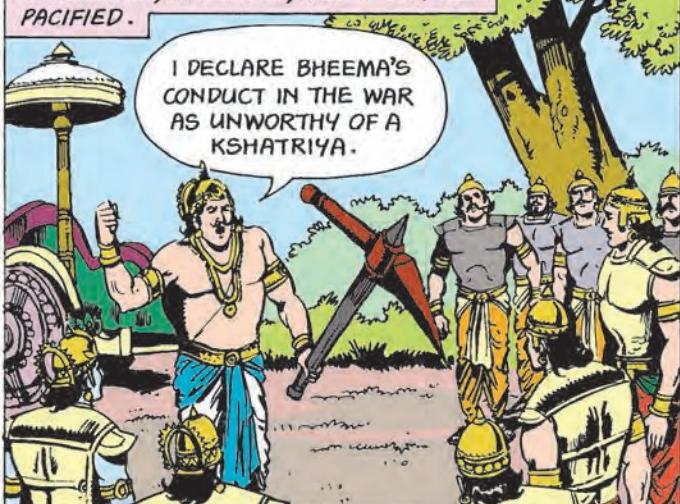
THERE IS NO NEED FOR SUCH A DISPLAY OF ANGER AGAINST BHEEMA. REMEMBER HOW HE HAD VOWED TO CRUSH DURYODHANA'S THIGH WHEN DRAUPADI WAS DISGRACED?



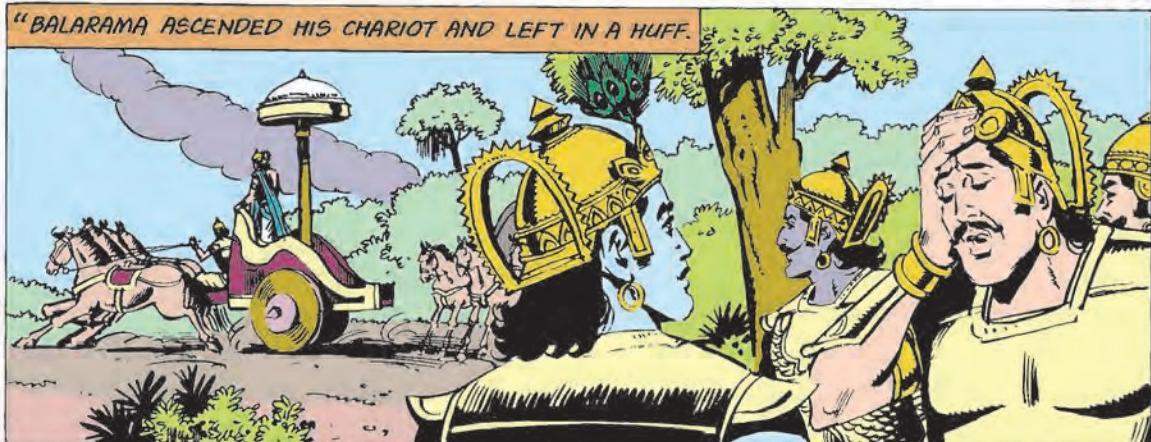
YOU CANNOT TOLERATE THIS SINGLE OFFENCE. HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN HOW THE KAURAVAS KILLED ABHIMANYU? COME, CALM YOURSELF, DEAR BROTHER.



"BALARAMA, HOWEVER, WOULD NOT BE PACIFIED.



"BALARAMA ASCENDED HIS CHARIOT AND LEFT IN A HUFF.



\* THE PLOUGH WAS BALARAMA'S PERSONAL WEAPON

AFTER THE WAR

"DHRITARASHTRA INTERRUPTED SANJAYA'S NARRATION.

HOW DID THE OTHER PANDAVAS REACT TO BHEEMA'S ACT?

DELIRIOUS WITH JOY, THEY BLEW LUSTILY THE CONCH-SHELLS, AND BEAT THE DRUMS.

"THEY SHOWERED BHEEMA WITH WORDS OF PRAISE.

BRAVO! WHO BUT YOU COULD DEFEAT THAT VALIANT DURYODHANA.

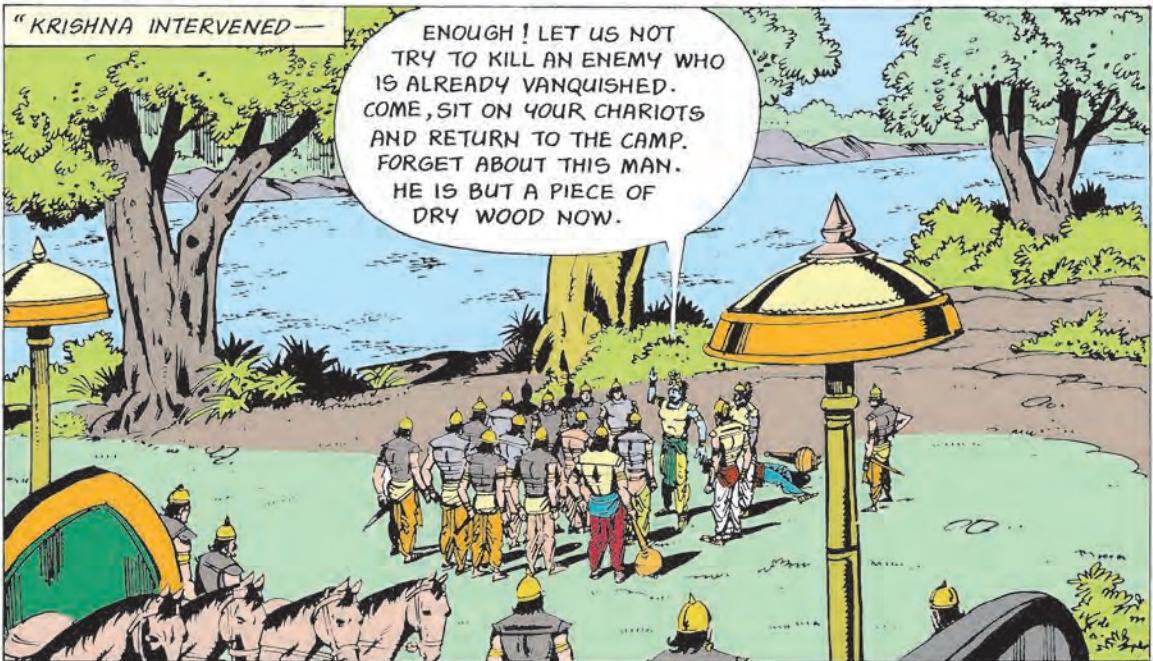
OUR HAIR STILL STANDS ON END WITH THE EXCITEMENT OF THAT DUEL.

YOUR FAME WILL SPREAD IN THE WHOLE WORLD NOW.



"KRISHNA INTERVENED—

ENOUGH! LET US NOT TRY TO KILL AN ENEMY WHO IS ALREADY VANQUISHED. COME, SIT ON YOUR CHARIOT AND RETURN TO THE CAMP. FORGET ABOUT THIS MAN. HE IS BUT A PIECE OF DRY WOOD NOW.



"ON HEARING KRISHNA SPEAK THUS, DURYODHANA PUSHED HIMSELF UPRIGHT AND EXCLAIMED—

O YOU SON OF A SLAVE ! ARE YOU NOT ASHAMED OF YOURSELF ? YOU HAVE BEEN UNJUST AND UNKIND TO US ALL THROUGH.

IT WAS YOU WHO REMINDED BHEEMA ABOUT HIS VOW TO BREAK MY THIGHS.

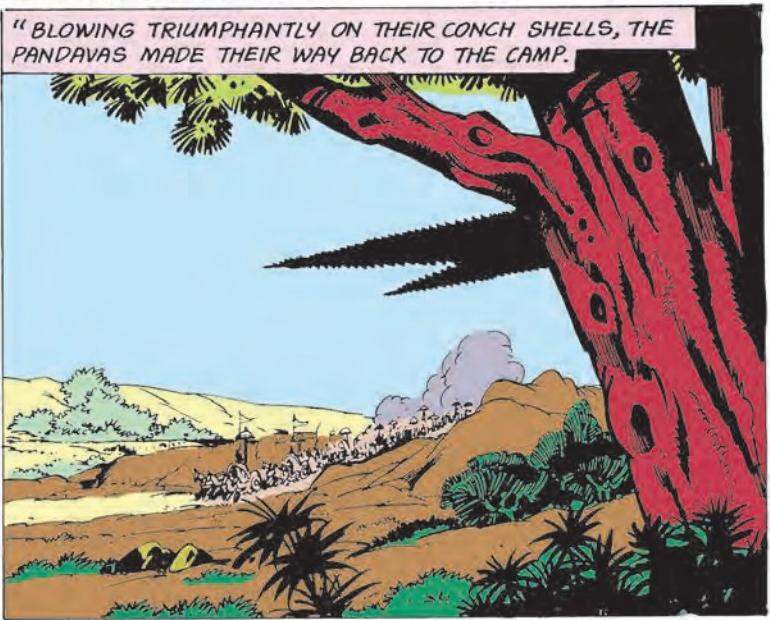
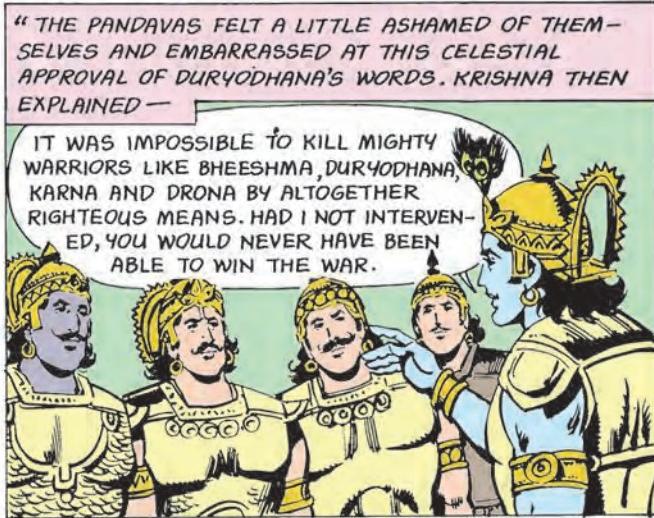
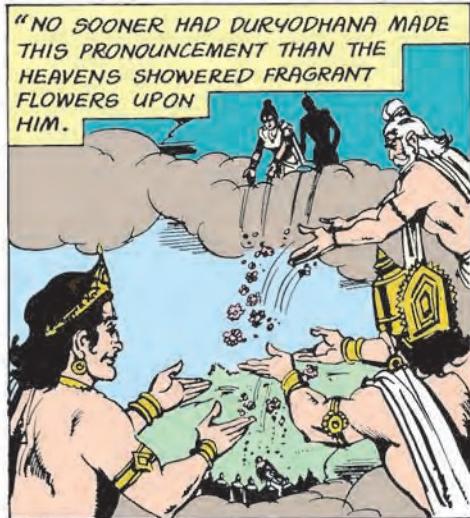
IT WAS YOU WHO CAUSED BHEESHPMA'S DOWNFALL BY USING SHIKHANDI AS A FRONT.

WAS IT NOT YOUR IDEA TO MAKE THE RIGHTEOUS YUDHISHTHIRA TELL A LIE THAT ASHWATTHAMA WAS DEAD AND MAKE DRONA TO LAY DOWN ARMS?

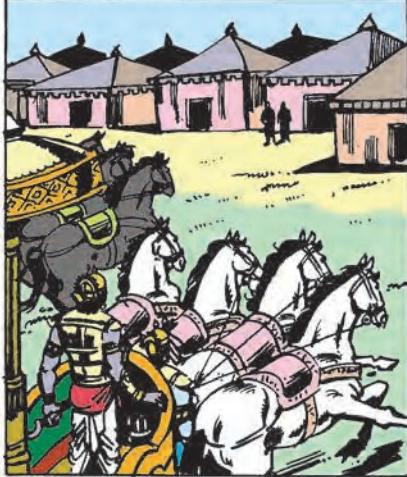
YOU LED KARNA TO USE HIS SHAKTI AGAINST GHATOTKACHA, THUS SAVING YOUR OWN DEAR ARJUNA.



AFTER THE WAR



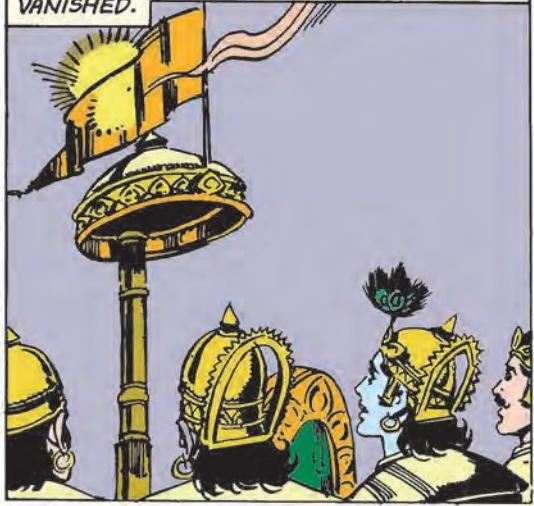
"THEY FIRST WENT TO DURYODHANA'S QUARTERS, NOW DESERTED AND DESOLATE.



"THE OTHERS GOT DOWN FROM THEIR CHARIOTS. KRISHNA SAID TO ARJUNA —



"AS SOON AS KRISHNA DESCENDED FROM THE CHARIOT, THE MONKEY WHICH HAD ADORNED THE BANNER SO FAR SUDDENLY VANISHED.

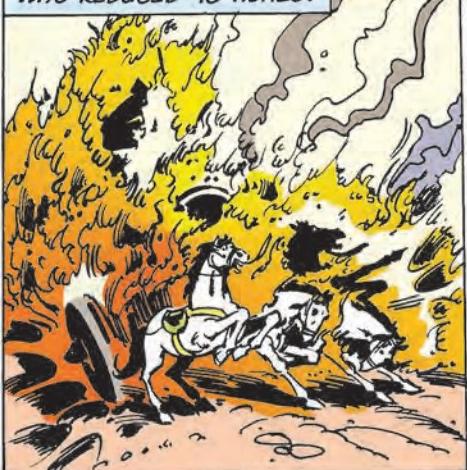


"AND THE GREAT CHARIOT, WHICH HAD WITHSTOOD THE CELESTIAL WEAPONS OF DRONA AND KARNA, WENT UP IN FLAMES.

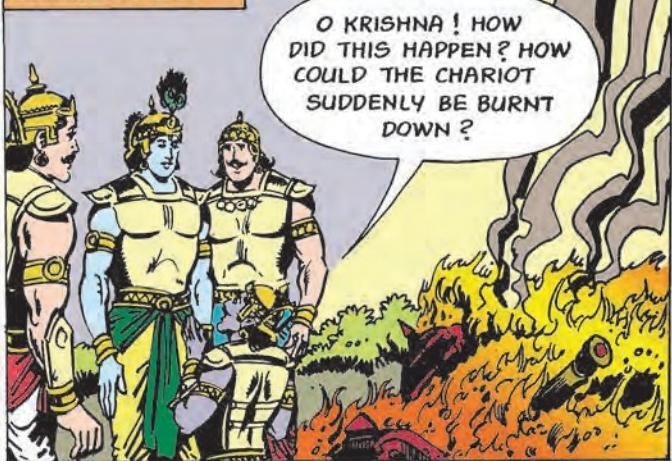


AFTER THE WAR

"IN AN INSTANT THE ENTIRE CHARIOT INCLUDING THE HORSES AND REINS WAS REDUCED TO ASHES."



"WHILE THE REST OF THE PANDAVAS WATCHED THIS MIRACLE WITH AWE AND FEAR, ARJUNA FELL AT KRISHNA'S FEET."



"KRISHNA GENTLY EXPLAINED —

THIS CHARIOT HAD ALREADY BEEN BURNT AND CHARRED BY THE REPEATED ONSLAUGHT OF THE ENEMY'S WEAPONS. BUT AS LONG AS I SAT IN IT, IT APPEARED TO BE INTACT.



NOW THAT YOUR MIGHTY TASK IS COMPLETED, I HAVE ABANDONED IT. SO THE CHARIOT IS NOW A HEAP OF ASHES.

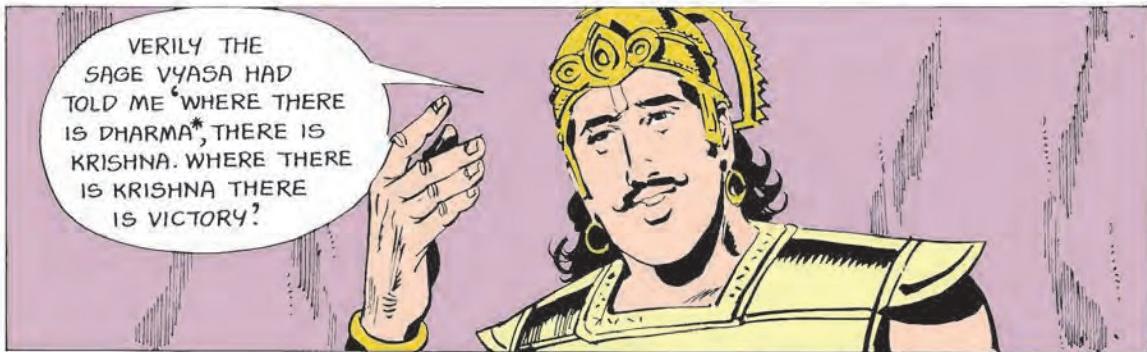


"SMILING, KRISHNA THEN EMBRACED YUDHISHTHIRA AND SAID —

IT IS FORTUNATE THAT YOU HAVE EMERGED VICTORIOUS IN THIS WAR. REMEMBER HOW YOU HAD ASKED ME TO PROTECT ARJUNA ? HERE HE HAS EMERGED UNSCATCHED FROM THE TERRIBLE WAR AND IS SAFE AND SOUND WITH ALL HIS BROTHERS.

IT IS BY YOUR GRACE, O LORD, THAT WE HAVE WON THIS WAR.





AFTER THE WAR

"KRISHNA READILY AGREED AND LEFT FOR HASTINAPURA ON HIS CHARIOT.



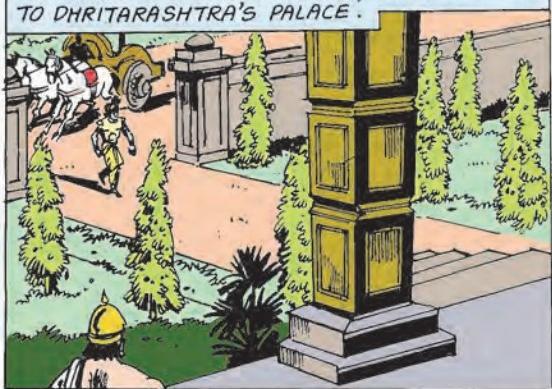
JANAMEJAYA INTERRUPTED  
VAISHAMPAYANA —

WAS IT NECESSARY  
TO SEND KRISHNA  
FOR THIS TASK ?

YES, IT WAS. YUDHISHTHIRA  
REALISED HOW GANDHARI  
WOULD HAVE BEEN AFFECTED  
BY THE NEWS OF THE DEATH  
OF HER SONS. UNASSUAGED,  
THAT VIRTUOUS WOMAN'S  
ANGER COULD ANNIHILATE  
THE WHOLE WORLD. THAT IS  
WHY YUDHISHTHIRA REQUESTED  
THE LORD HIMSELF TO RUSH  
TO HASTINAPURA AND SAVE  
THE SITUATION.



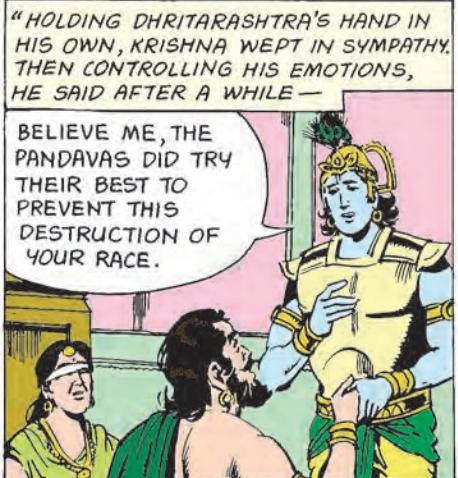
"ON REACHING HASTINAPURA, KRISHNA WENT  
TO DHRITARASHTRA'S PALACE .



" BOWING RESPECTFULLY TO THE AGED KING, HE  
GREETED SAGE VYASA AND GANDHARI WHO  
WERE ALSO SEATED THERE.

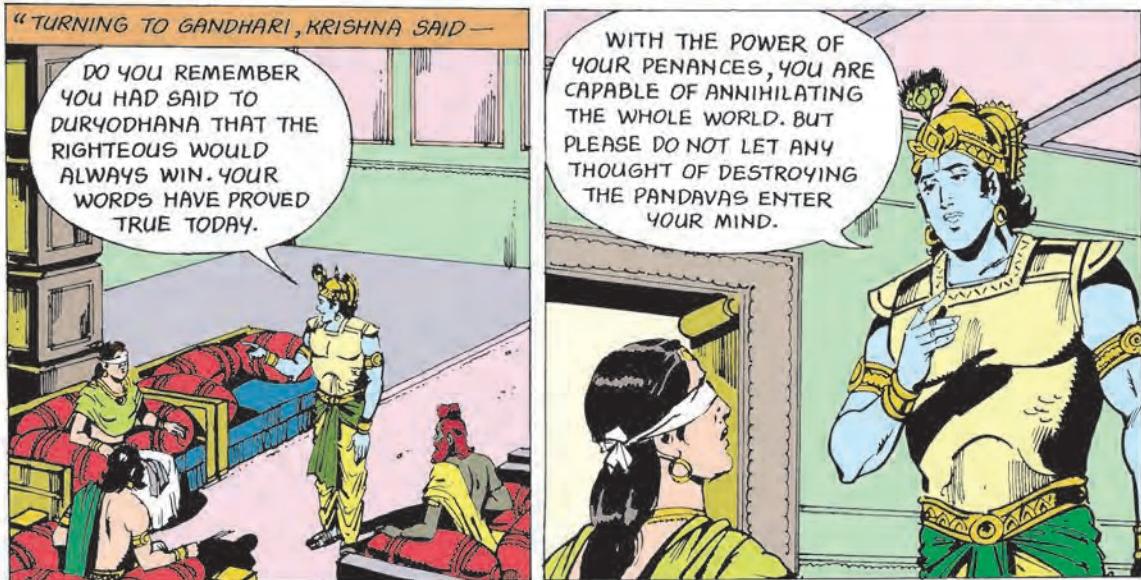
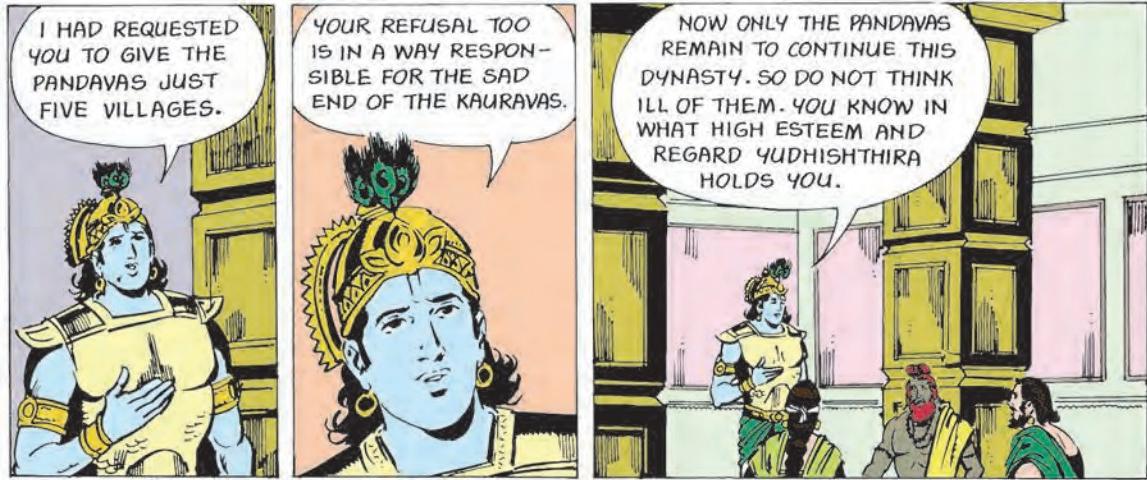


" HOLDING DHRITARASHTRA'S HAND IN  
HIS OWN, KRISHNA WEPT IN SYMPATHY.  
THEN CONTROLLING HIS EMOTIONS,  
HE SAID AFTER A WHILE —



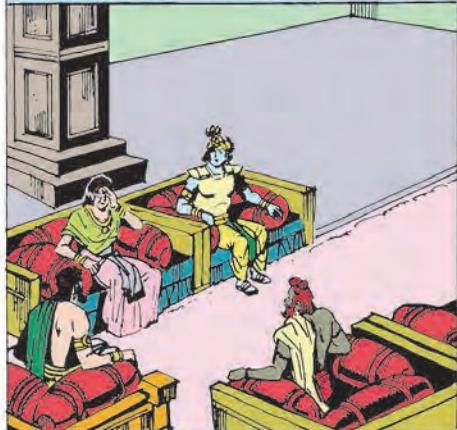
THEY BORE ALL THE INSULTS  
HEAPED ON THEM BY THE  
KAURAVAS AND SPENT SO  
MANY YEARS IN THE FOREST.



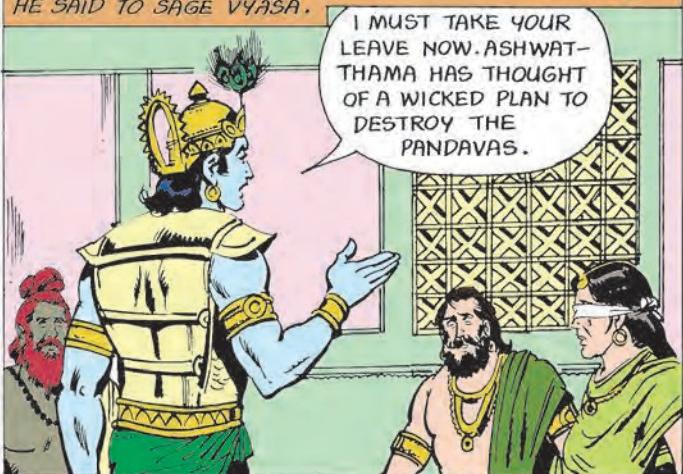


AFTER THE WAR

"KRISHNA SAT FOR A WHILE TRYING TO CONSOLE THE AGED KING AND THE DESOLATE MOTHER WITH HIS SOOTHING WORDS AND GENTLE MANNER.



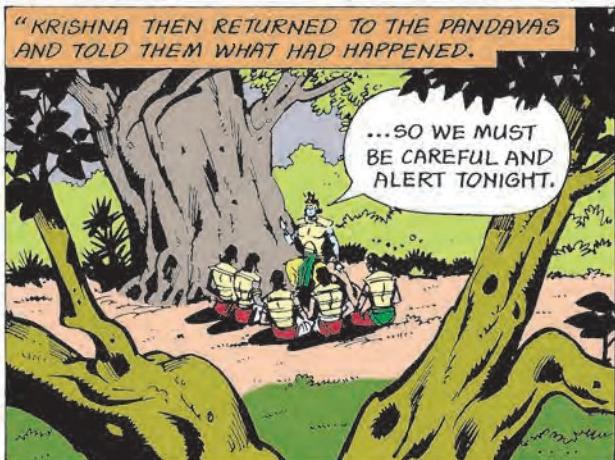
"JUST THEN, HE DIVINED THE EVIL PLOT EVOLVING IN ASHWATTHAMA'S MIND. STANDING UP WITH A START, HE SAID TO SAGE VYASA,



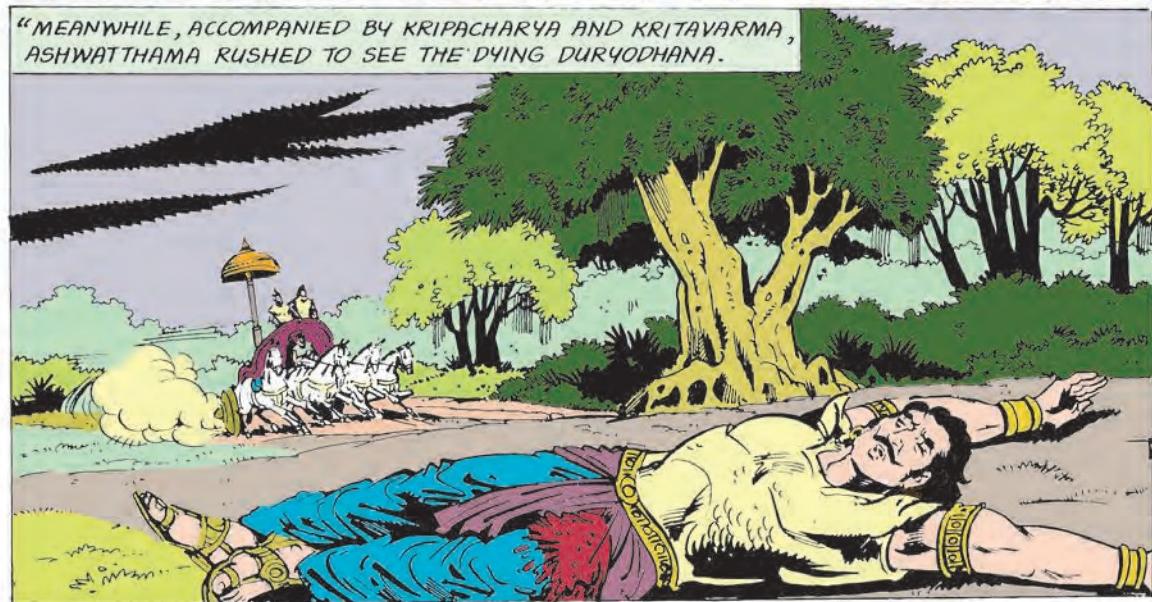
"BOTH GANDHARI AND DHRITARASHTRA ASKED HIM TO GO.



"KRISHNA THEN RETURNED TO THE PANDAVAS AND TOLD THEM WHAT HAD HAPPENED.



"MEANWHILE, ACCOMPANIED BY KRIPACHARYA AND KRITAVARMA, ASHWATTHAMA RUSHED TO SEE THE DYING DURYODHANA.



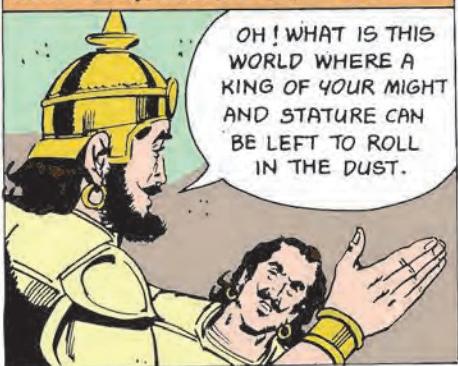
"THEY FOUND DURYODHANA BLEEDING PROFUSELY AND TOSSED AND TURNING HELPLESSLY IN AGONY.



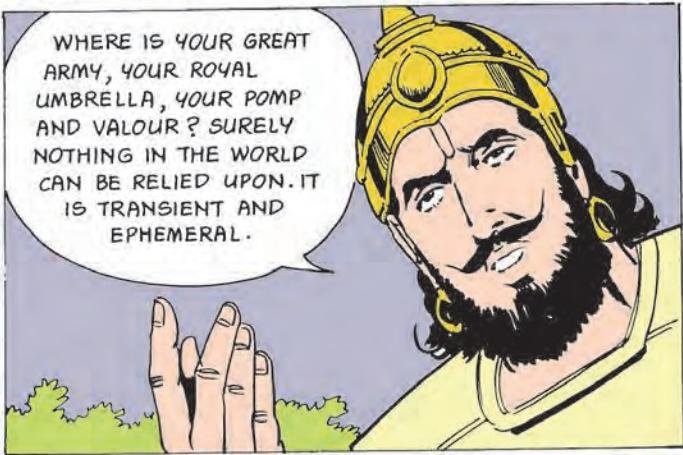
"QUICKLY THEY GOT OFF FROM THE CHARIOT AND SAT BESIDE HIM.



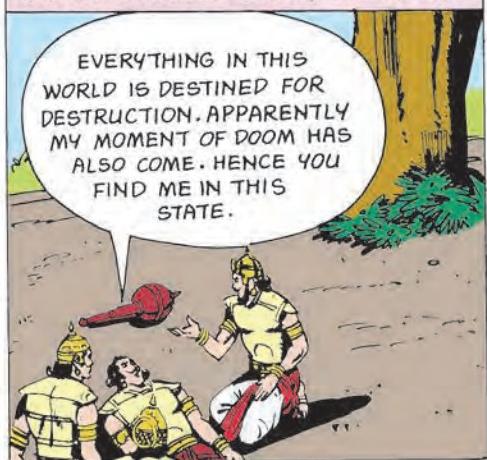
"ASHWATTHAMA COULD NOT BEAR TO SEE THE KING IN THIS PATHETIC STATE. WITH TEARS IN HIS EYES, HE SAID—



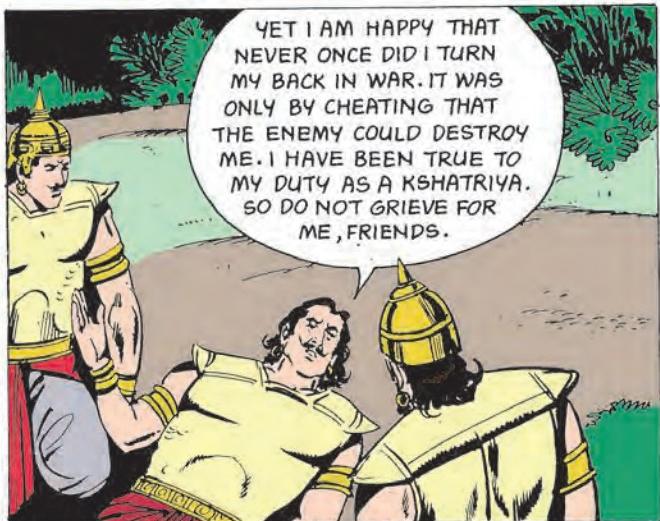
WHERE IS YOUR GREAT ARMY, YOUR ROYAL UMBRELLA, YOUR POMP AND VALOUR? SURELY NOTHING IN THE WORLD CAN BE RELIED UPON. IT IS TRANSIENT AND EPHEMERAL.



"DURYODHANA TOO BROKE DOWN AT ASHWATTHAMA'S DISPLAY OF SORROW.



EVERYTHING IN THIS WORLD IS DESTINED FOR DESTRUCTION. APPARENTLY MY MOMENT OF DOOM HAS ALSO COME. HENCE YOU FIND ME IN THIS STATE.



YET I AM HAPPY THAT NEVER ONCE DID I TURN MY BACK IN WAR. IT WAS ONLY BY CHEATING THAT THE ENEMY COULD DESTROY ME. I HAVE BEEN TRUE TO MY DUTY AS A KSHATRIYA. SO DO NOT Grieve FOR ME, FRIENDS.

AFTER THE WAR

"THE TEARS IN DURYODHANA'S EYES FILLED ASHWATTHAMA WITH RAGE.

EVEN MY FATHER'S DEATH BROUGHT ABOUT BY DECEIT DID NOT HURT ME AS MUCH AS YOUR DESTRUCTION AT THE HANDS OF THOSE WICKED PANDAVAS...



CLENCHING HIS FISTS HE SAID —

...I SWEAR TO YOU BY EVERYTHING SACRED THAT I WILL SEND ALL THE PANCHALAS AND THE PANDAVAS TO DEATH TONIGHT. GIVE ME YOUR PERMISSION TO DO SO.



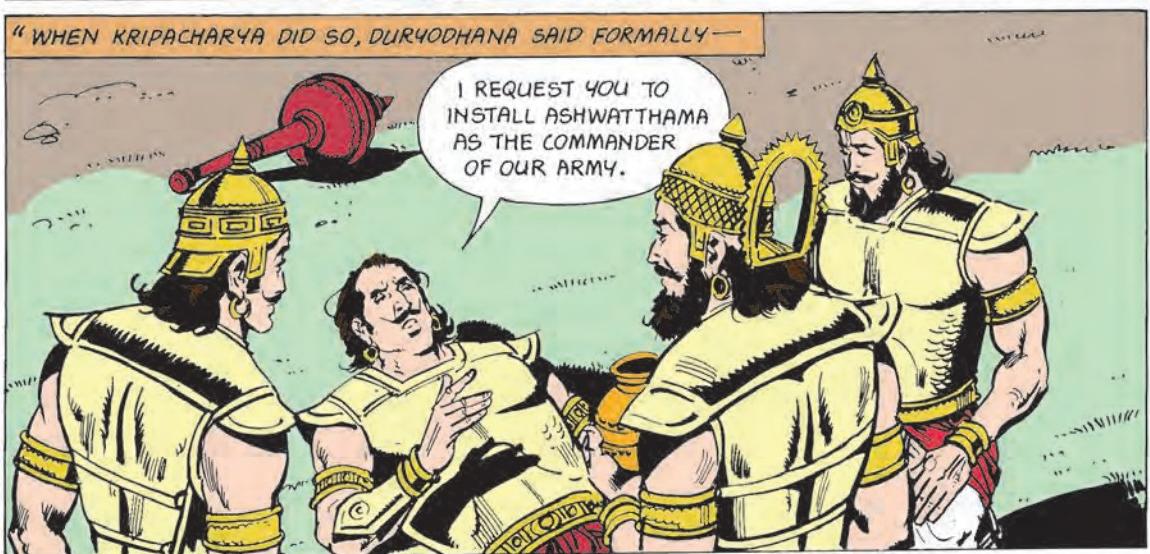
"DURYODHANA WAS TOUCHED. ADDRESSING KRIPA, HE SAID —

ACHARYA, PLEASE  
BRING WATER IN  
A VESSEL.



"WHEN KRIPACHARYA DID SO, DURYODHANA SAID FORMALLY —

I REQUEST YOU TO  
INSTALL ASHWATTHAMA  
AS THE COMMANDER  
OF OUR ARMY.



"KRIPACHARYA POURED THE WATER OVER ASHWATTHAMA AS A RITUAL OF THE CEREMONIAL BATH."



"ASHWATTHAMA EMBRACED THE PROSTRATE DURYODHANA IN FAREWELL AND THE THREE WARRIORS LEFT THE KING TO SPEND THE DARK NIGHT ALONE."



"SOON THEY SIGHTED THE CAMP, BUT WARY OF THE PANDAVAS, THEY HALTED IN A NEARBY FOREST."



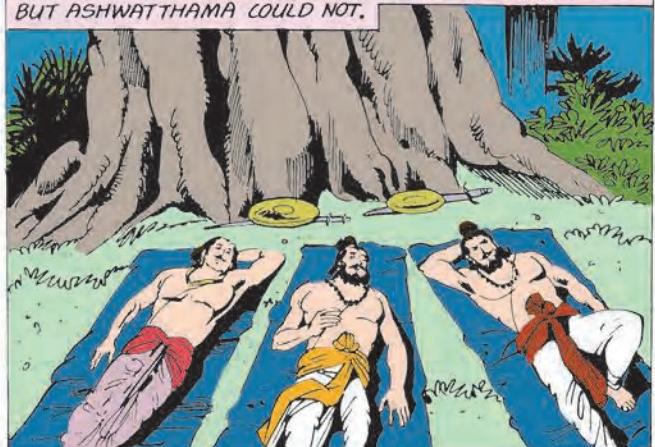
"THEY RESTED FOR A WHILE. SOON THE JOYOUS SOUNDS OF CELEBRATION FROM THE PANDAVA CAMP PUT FEAR IN THEIR HEARTS AND THEY MOVED DEEPER INTO THE FOREST."



"SAFE IN THE HEART OF THE FOREST, THEY REFRESHED THEIR HORSES AND DECIDED TO REST UNDER A SPREADING BANYAN TREE."

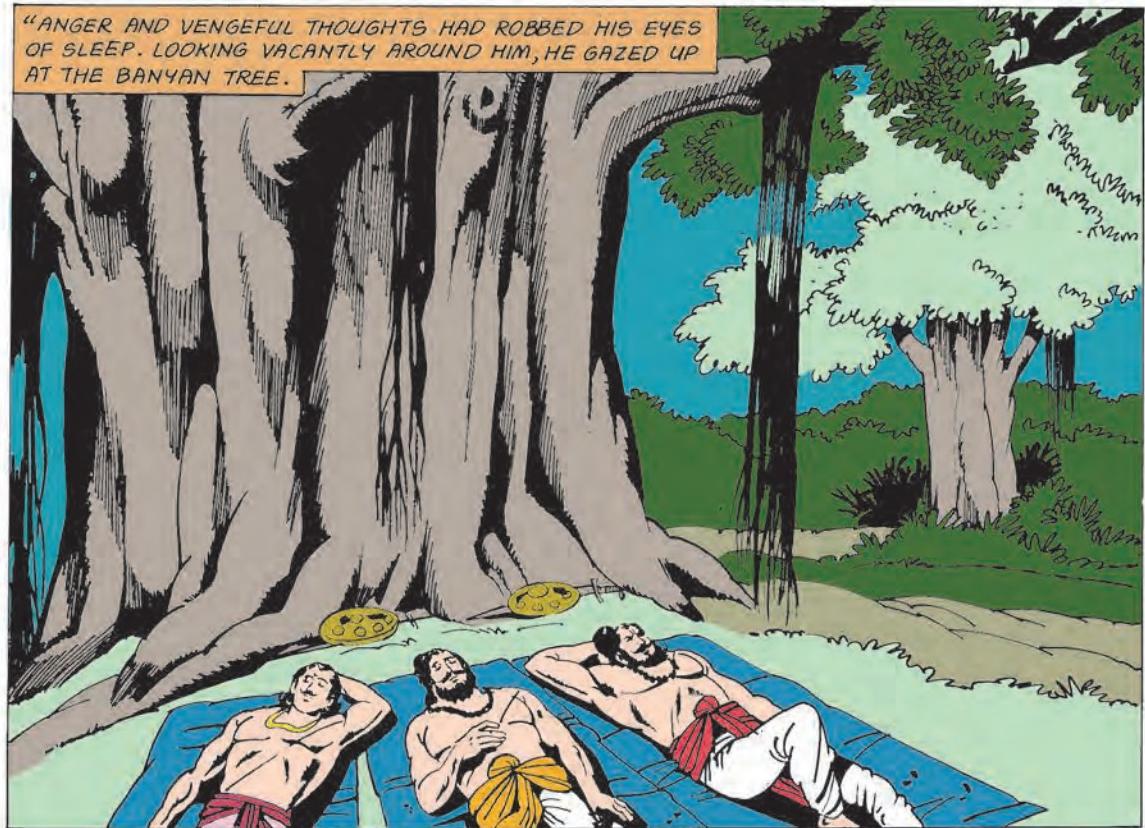


"WEARY AND WOUNDED, KRITAVARMA AND KRIPACHARYA FELL ASLEEP AS SOON AS THEY LAY DOWN. BUT ASHWATTHAMA COULD NOT."



AFTER THE WAR

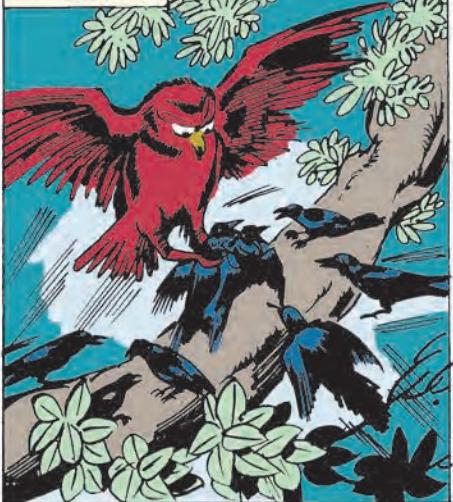
"ANGER AND VENGEFUL THOUGHTS HAD ROBBED HIS EYES OF SLEEP. LOOKING VACANTLY AROUND HIM, HE GAZED UP AT THE BANYAN TREE.



"MANY CROWS WERE PERCHED PEACEFULLY IN THEIR NESTS ON THE MYRIAD BRANCHES OF THE OLD BANYAN TREE. PEACE AND TRANQUILLITY REIGNED IN THE DARK FOREST. SUDDENLY THE SILENCE WAS PIERCED BY THE SCREECH OF A TERRIBLE-LOOKING OWL.



"HE SWEEPED DOWN ON THE SLEEPING CROWS AND ATTACKED THEM WITHOUT MERCY."



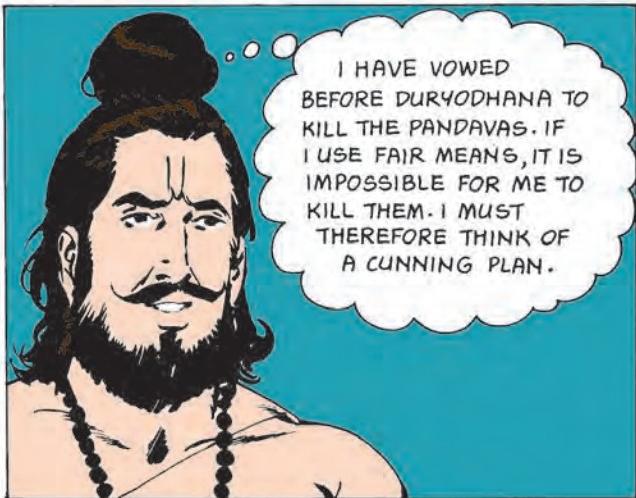
"IN A MATTER OF MOMENTS, THE PLACE WAS STREWN WITH THE REMAINS OF A MYRIAD CROWS. THE OWL SEEMED PLEASED WITH HIMSELF."



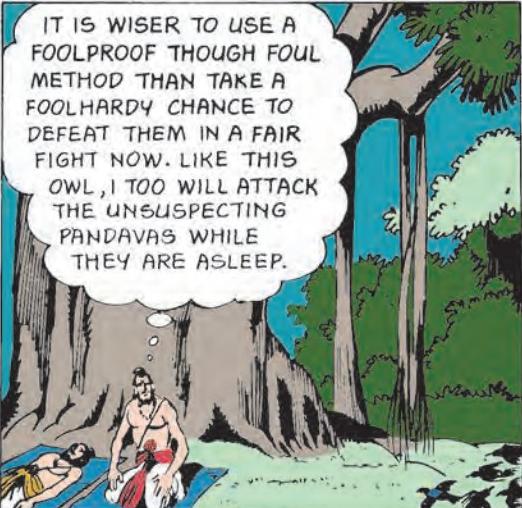
"WATCHING THIS FROM BELOW, AN IDEA TOOK ROOT IN ASHWATTHAMA'S MIND."



I HAVE VOWED BEFORE DURYODHANA TO KILL THE PANDAVAS. IF I USE FAIR MEANS, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO KILL THEM. I MUST THEREFORE THINK OF A CUNNING PLAN.

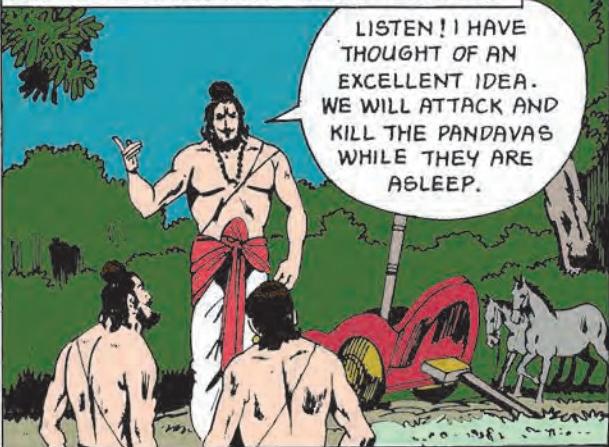


IT IS WISER TO USE A FOOLPROOF THOUGH FOUL METHOD THAN TAKE A FOOLHARDY CHANCE TO DEFEAT THEM IN A FAIR FIGHT NOW. LIKE THIS OWL, I TOO WILL ATTACK THE UNSUSPECTING PANDAVAS WHILE THEY ARE ASLEEP.



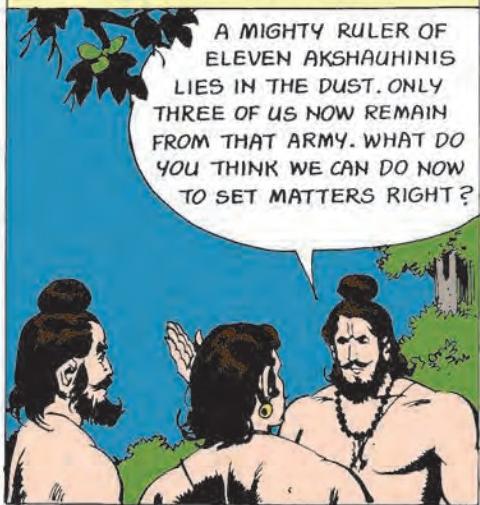
"EXCITED AT THE PROSPECT, HE ROUSED KRIPA AND KRITAVARMA FROM THEIR SLUMBER."

LISTEN! I HAVE THOUGHT OF AN EXCELLENT IDEA. WE WILL ATTACK AND KILL THE PANDAVAS WHILE THEY ARE ASLEEP.

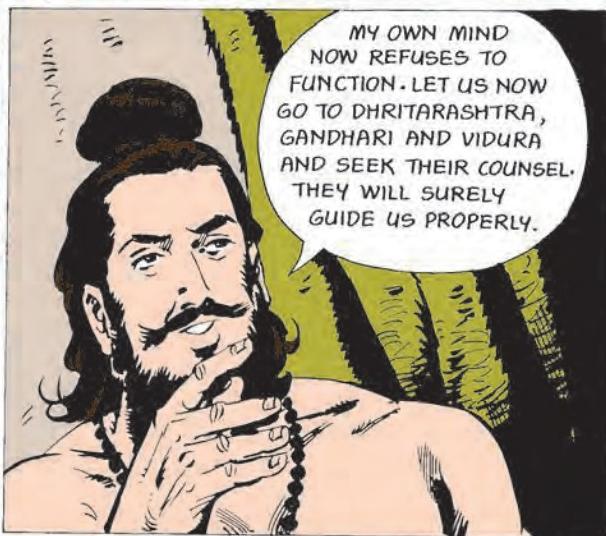
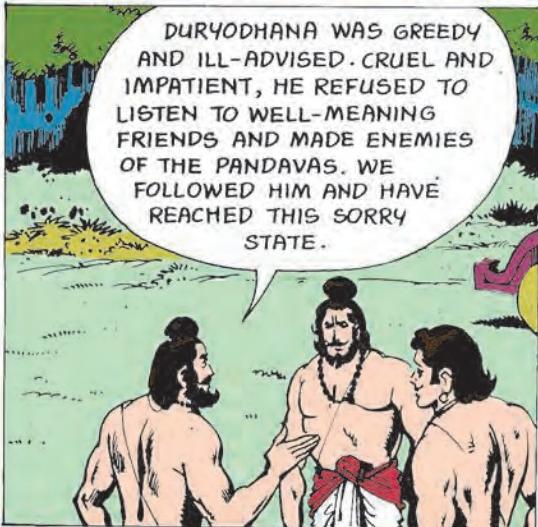
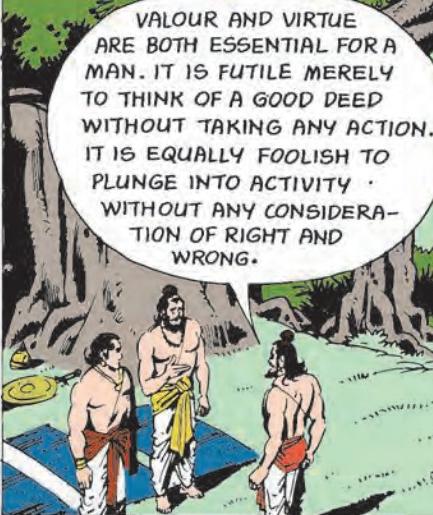


AFTER THE WAR

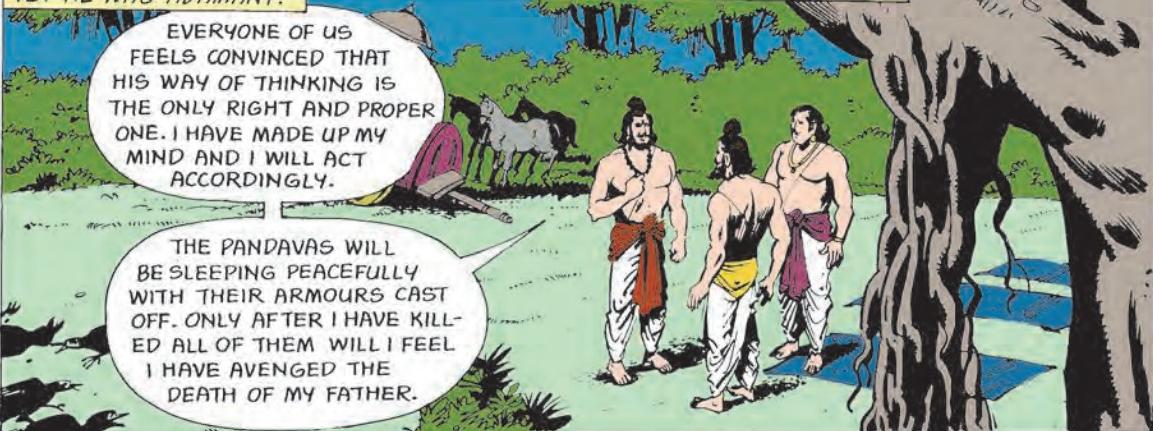
"HORRIFIED AT HIS SUGGESTION, THEY GAZED AT HIM SPEECHLESS WITH SHOCK. ASHWATTHAMA SAID—



"Kripacharya tried to counsel the excited Ashwatthama.



"ASHWATTHAMA COULD NOT DENY THE WISDOM OF THE ACHARYA'S WORDS. YET HE WAS ADAMANT.



"KRIPACHARYA SAID —

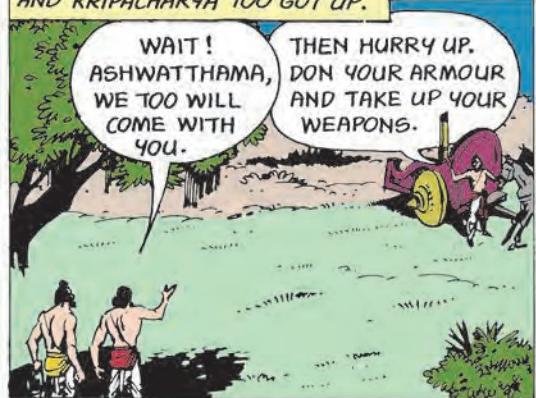
YOU SEEM TO HAVE MADE UP YOUR MIND. BUT, ANYWAY, SLEEP AWHILE AND REST YOURSELF. TOMORROW MORNING WE WILL BOTH COME WITH YOU TO ATTACK THE PANDAVAS. YOU WILL FEEL REFRESHED AFTER SOME REST.

"ASHWATTHAMA SAW THROUGH THE ACHARYA'S GENTLE PERSUASION. HE SHOUTED —

HOW CAN A MAN FILLED WITH ANXIETY, SORROW, ANGER OR DESIRE SLEEP? I AM TROUBLED BY ALL OF THESE. I CANNOT CONTROL MYSELF NOW. I WILL REST ONLY AFTER GETTING RID OF ALL THE ENEMIES.



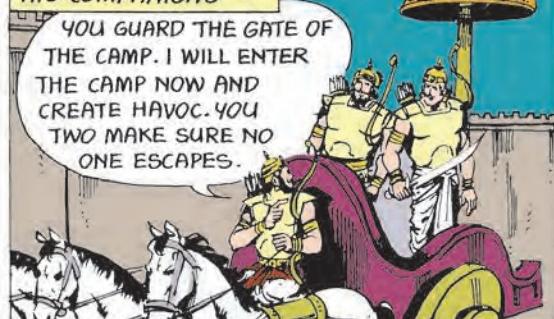
"WHEN ASHWATTHAMA BEGAN TO HARNESS THE HORSES TO HIS CHARIOT, KRITAVARMA AND KRIPACHARYA TOO GOT UP.



"THE THREE OF THEM PROCEEDED TO THE PANDAVA CAMP.



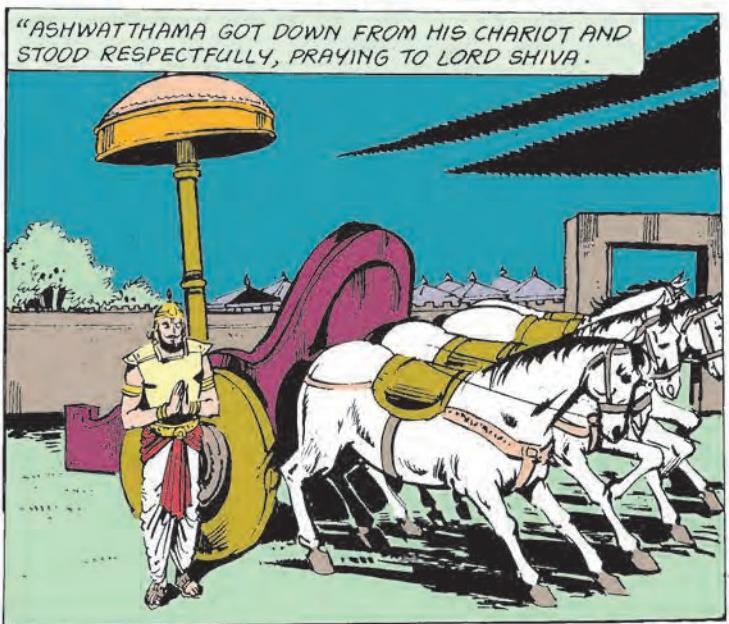
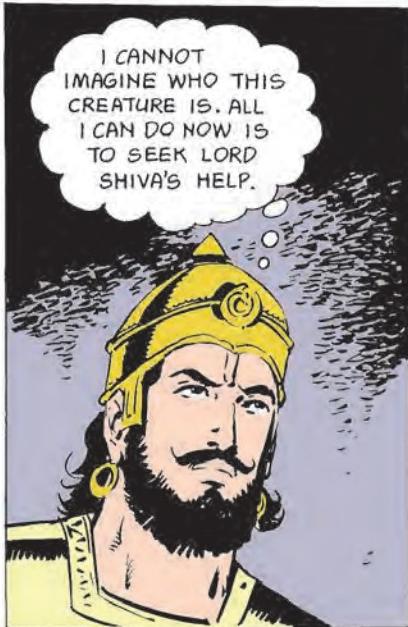
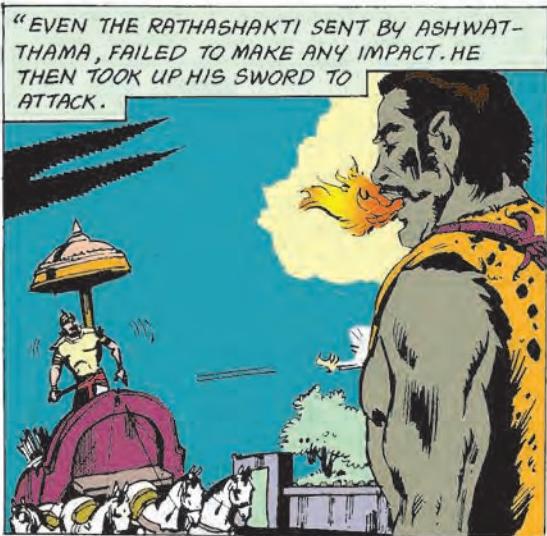
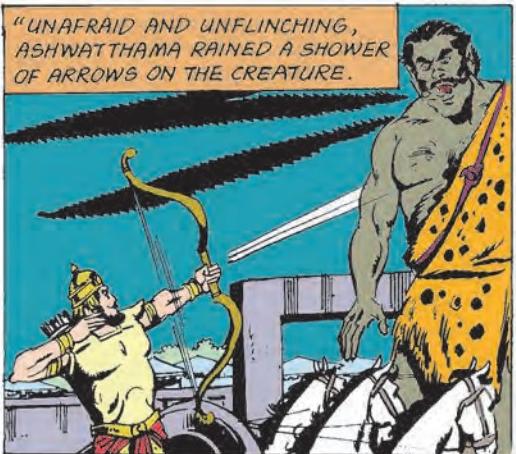
"ASHWATTHAMA WHISPERED TO HIS COMPANIONS —



"AT THE GATE OF THE CAMP, A STRANGE SIGHT MET THEIR EYES. AN ENORMOUS MONSTER LOOMED LARGE IN THEIR PATH.



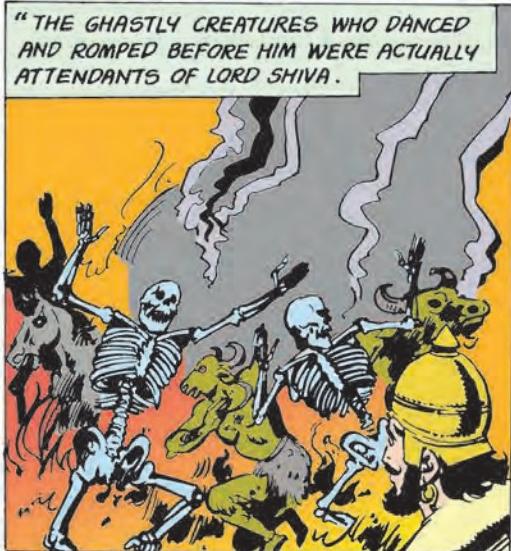
AFTER THE WAR



"WHEN HE MEDITATED FOR A WHILE, A GOLDEN ALTAR APPEARED BEFORE HIM. FROM IT EMERGED HUGE BEINGS WITH STRANGE FEATURES AND GROTESQUE LIMBS."



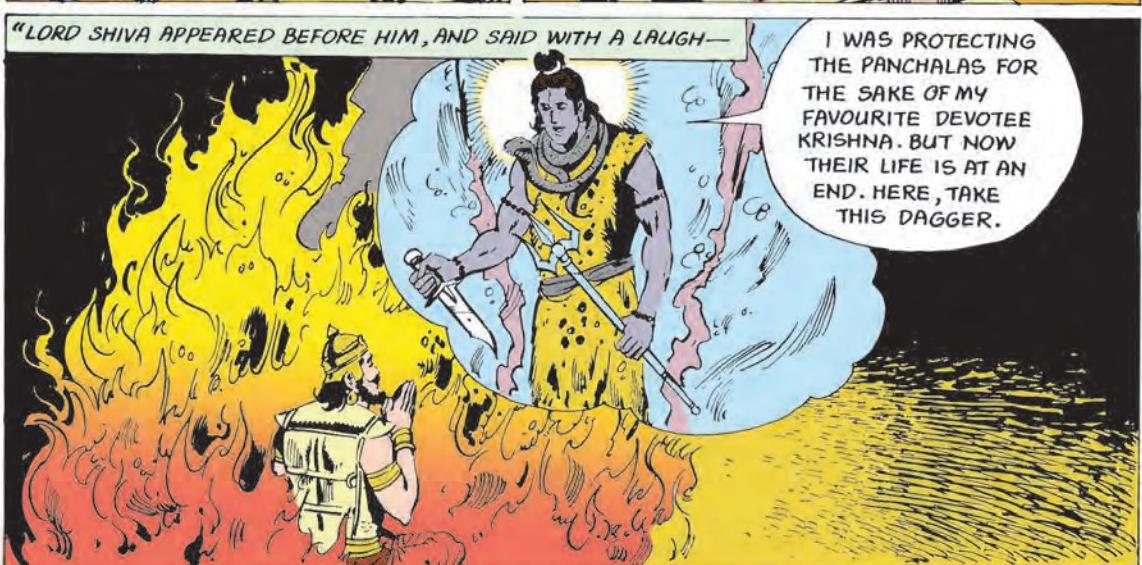
"THE GHASTLY CREATURES WHO DANCED AND ROMPED BEFORE HIM WERE ACTUALLY ATTENDANTS OF LORD SHIVA."



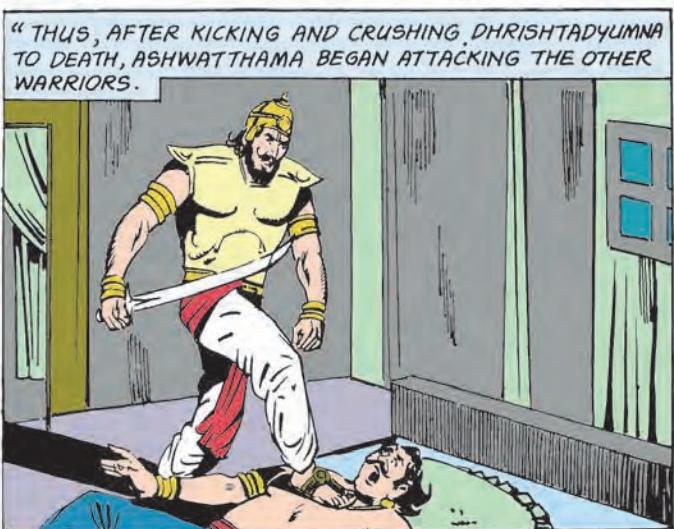
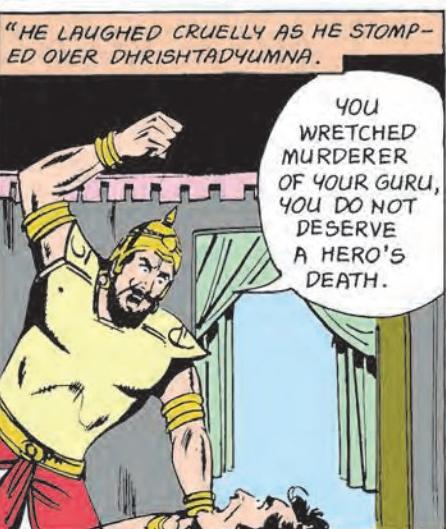
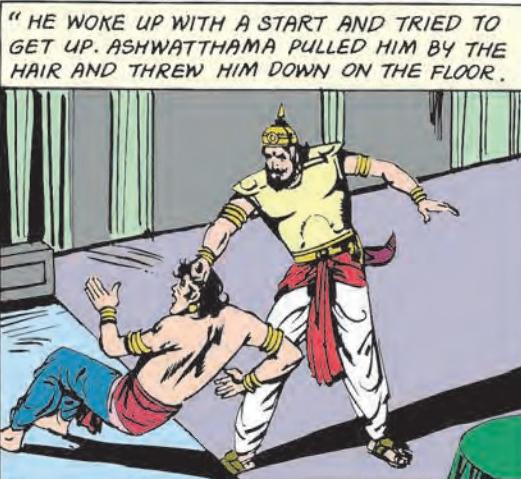
"REALISING THIS, ASHWATTHAMA CLIMBED INTO THE BLAZING ALTAR."



"LORD SHIVA APPEARED BEFORE HIM, AND SAID WITH A LAUGH—"



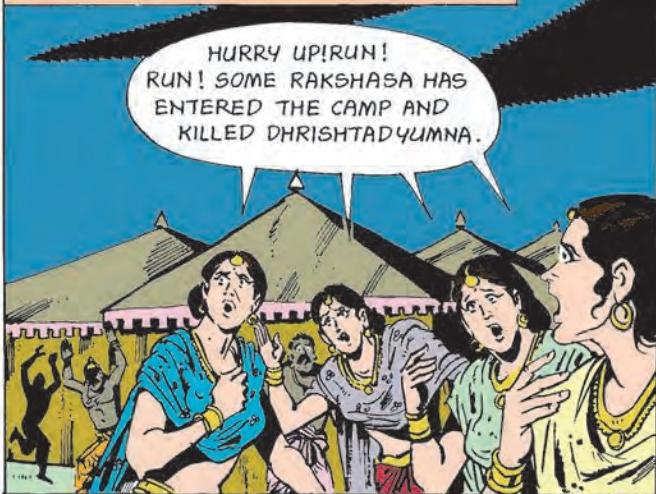
AFTER THE WAR



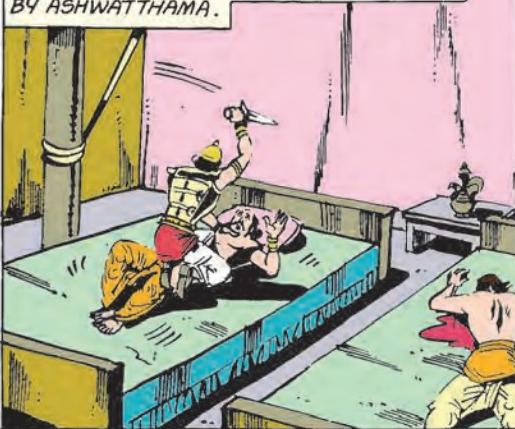
"THE SAME CRUEL PROCESS WAS REPEATED OVER AND OVER AGAIN."



"THE CRY OF THE VICTIMS WOKE UP THE GUARDS AND THE WOMENFOLK. THEY SCREAMED ALOUD."



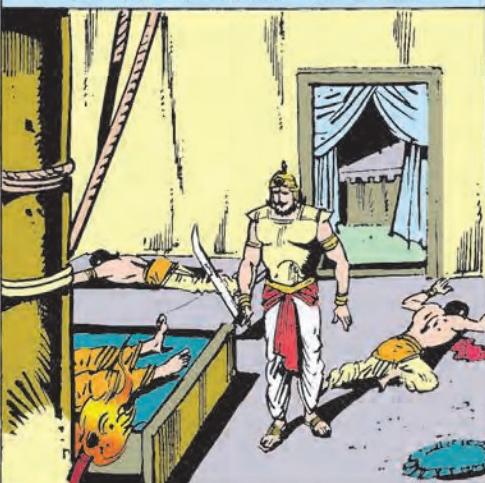
"LIKE MUTE AND HELPLESS ANIMALS, MANY WARRIOR WERE SLAUGHTERED BY ASHWATTHAMA."



"SOON SHIKHANI AND THE OTHER WARRIORS, WHO HAD EARLIER ESCAPED THE MIGHTY BATTLE UNSCATHED, WERE KILLED WHILE STILL HALF ASLEEP."



"ONE BY ONE, ALL THE SONS OF DRAUPADI AND ALL THE PANCHALAS WERE KILLED."



"IN HIS FURY, ASHWATTHAMA ATTACKED EVEN THE ANIMALS OF THE ENEMY CAMP."

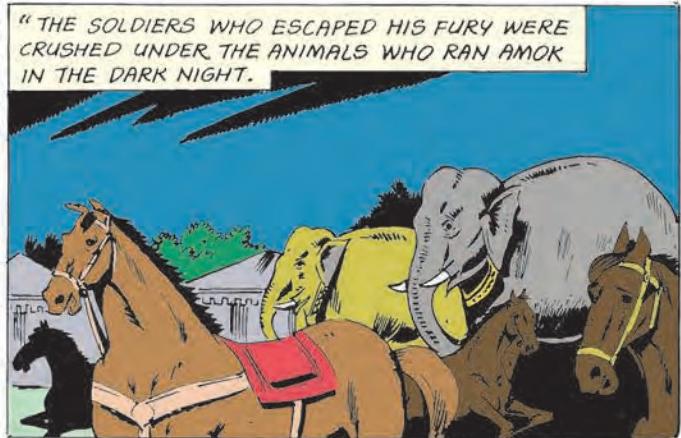


AFTER THE WAR

"ASHWATTHAMA WAS LIKE DEATH INCARNATE, RUNNING HITHER AND THITHER, SWORD IN HAND."



"THE SOLDIERS WHO ESCAPED HIS FURY WERE CRUSHED UNDER THE ANIMALS WHO RAN AMOK IN THE DARK NIGHT."



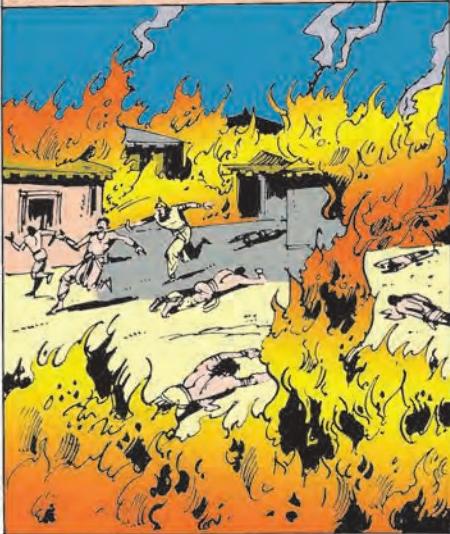
"SLEEPY AND CONFUSED WITH FEAR, SOME SOLDIERS TRIED TO RUN OUT OF THE CAMP. BUT KRITAVARMA AND KRIPTACHARYA WERE READY TO CATCH THEM."



"IN A BID TO HELP ASHWATTHAMA, THEY SET FIRE TO THE CAMP FROM THREE SIDES."



"IN THE BRIGHT LIGHT OF THE RAGING FIRE ASHWATTHAMA MANAGED TO DESTROY THE ENTIRE ARMY..."



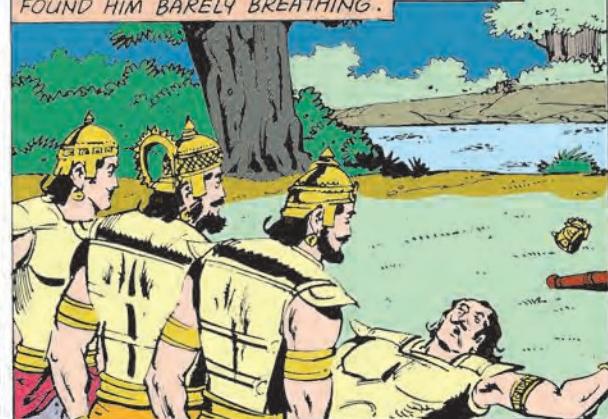
"...SO THAT WHEN HE EMERGED AT DAYBREAK AFTER THE MASSACRE, THE CAMP LAY AS SILENT AS IT HAD BEEN WHEN HE HAD ENTERED IT EARLIER IN THE NIGHT."



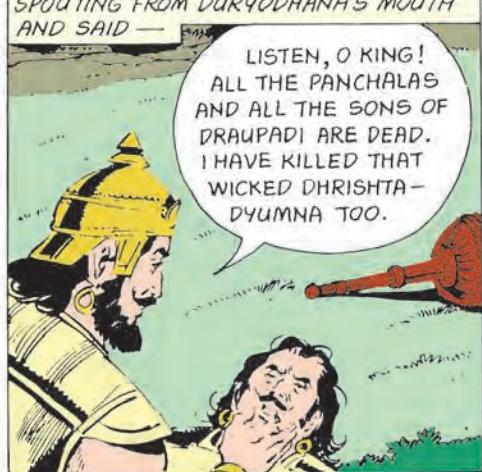
"ASHWATTHAMA, KRITAVARMA AND KRIPACHARYA PIERCED THE SILENCE OF THE NIGHT WITH THEIR CRIES OF REJOICING.



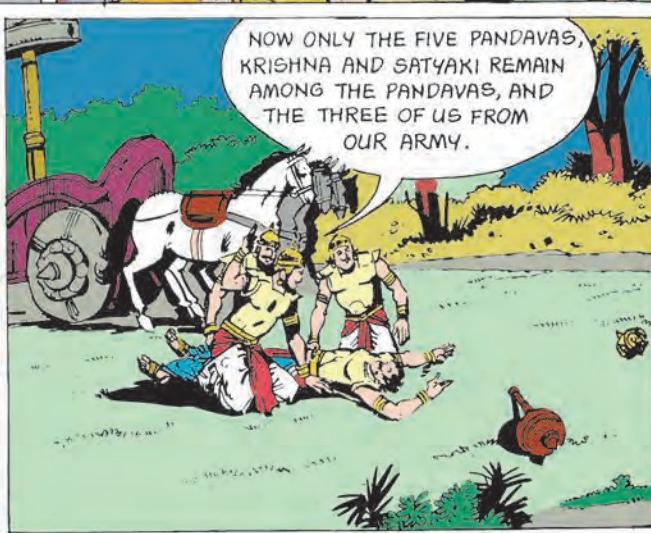
"WHEN THEY REACHED DURYODHANA, THEY FOUND HIM BARELY BREATHING.



"ASHWATTHAMA WIPE THE BLOOD SPOUTING FROM DURYODHANA'S MOUTH AND SAID —



NOW ONLY THE FIVE PANDAVAS, KRISHNA AND SATYAKI REMAIN AMONG THE PANDAVAS, AND THE THREE OF US FROM OUR ARMY.



AFTER THE WAR

"THE NEWS REVIVED DURYODHANA LONG ENOUGH TO SAY —

ASHWATTHAMA! YOU HAVE DONE FOR ME WHAT BHEESHMA, DRONA OR KARNA COULD NOT DO. BLESS YOU! NOW WE WILL ALL MEET IN HEAVEN.

"WITH THESE WORDS, DURYODHANA BREATHED HIS LAST. THE MIGHTY WARRIOR WHO HAD BEEN THE FIRST TO ENTER THE BATTLEFIELD WAS AMONG THE LAST TO DIE.



"BRIEFLY EMBRACING THE DEPARTED KING DURYODHANA THE THREE WARRIORS LEFT THE PLACE.

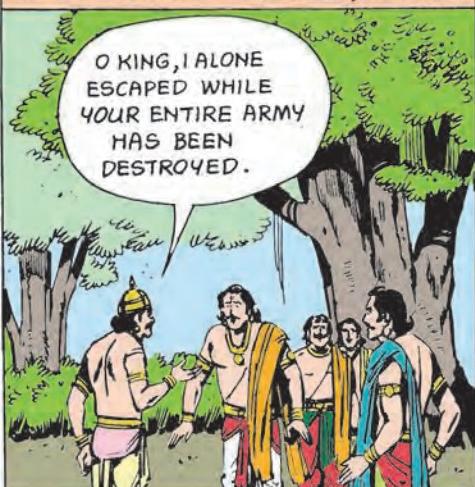


"VAISHAMPAYANA CONTINUED HIS NARRATION —

WHEN SANJAYA HEARD THE NEWS OF DURYODHANA'S DEATH, HE LOST THE POWER OF THE DIVINE VISION BESTOWED ON HIM BY SAGE VYASA. MEANWHILE, DHRISHTADYUMNA'S CHARIOTEER HAD SOMEHOW ESCAPED THE MASSACRE AND RUSHED TO YUDHISHTHIRA WITH THE TERRIBLE NEWS.



"RELATING THE GRUESOME DETAILS OF THE MIDNIGHT MASSACRE, HE SAID—

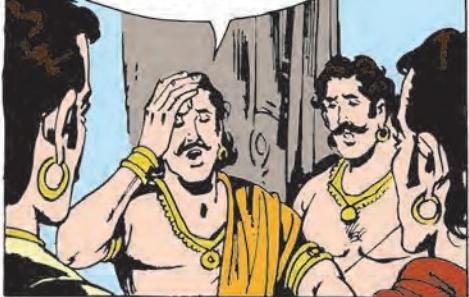


"YUDHISHTHIRA FAINTED WITH SHOCK. SATYAKI CAUGHT HIM AS HE FELL.



"ON RECOVERING, YUDHISHTHIRA LAMENTED ALOUD—

ALAS ! I HAVE LOST ALL AFTER WINNING THE WAR. MY WARRIORS WHO HAD ESCAPED THE ARROWS OF THE MIGHTY KARNA AND DRONA HAVE BEEN KILLED BY THEIR OWN CARELESSNESS.



"AFTER SENDING NAKULA TO FETCH DRAUPADI, YUDHISHTHIRA SORROWFULLY WENT TO HIS CAMP WITH HIS OTHER BROTHERS.



"HE COULD NOT BEAR TO SEE THAT AWFUL SIGHT AND, CRYING INCONSOLABLY FELL DOWN IN A SWOON."



"EVEN AS THE OTHER PANDAVAS TRIED TO CONSOLE HIM, NAKULA ARRIVED ON THE SCENE WITH DRAUPADI.



"AGITATED AS SHE WAS WITH THE NEWS, THE SCENE OF MASSACRE WAS TOO TRAGIC A SIGHT FOR HER. BHEEMA CAUGHT HER JUST IN TIME AS SHE FAINTED."

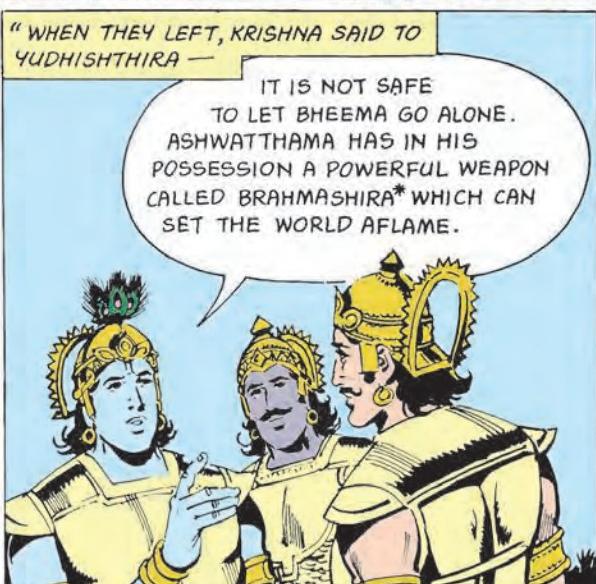
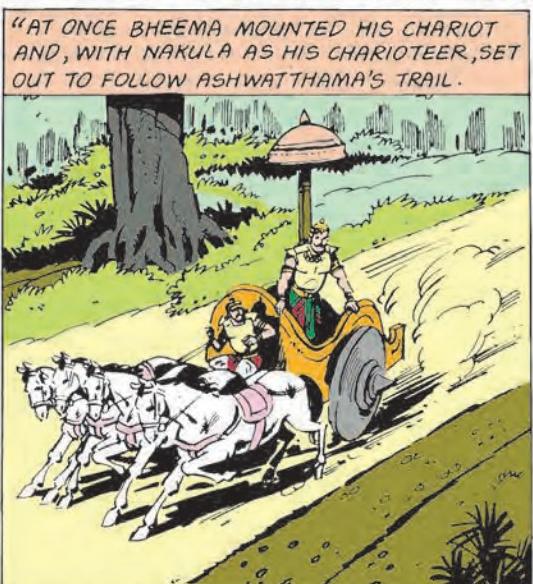
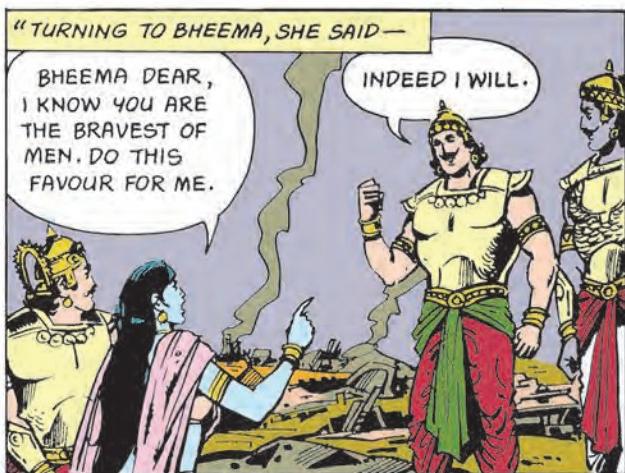
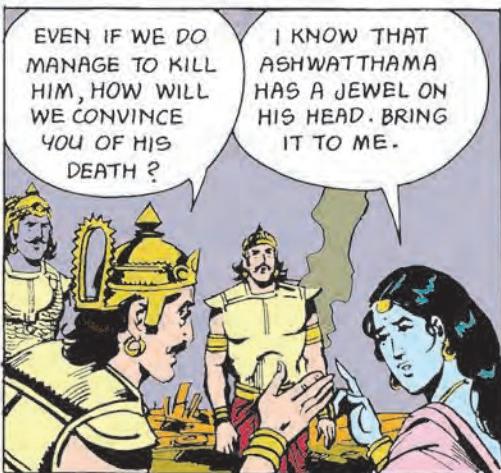
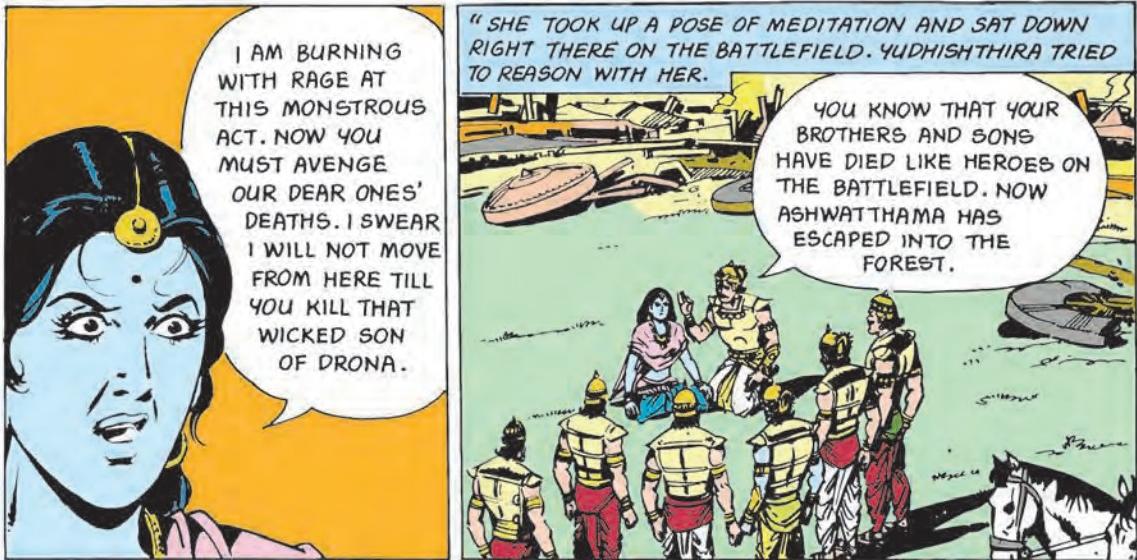


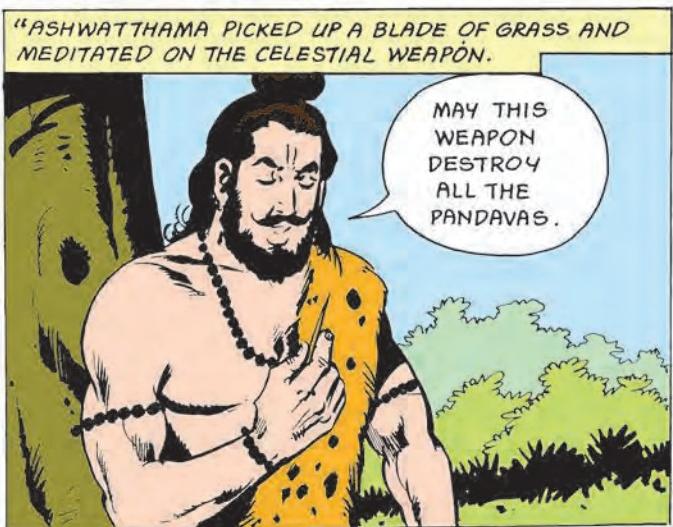
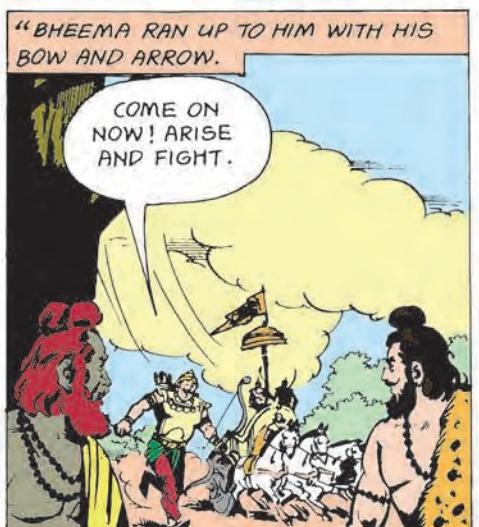
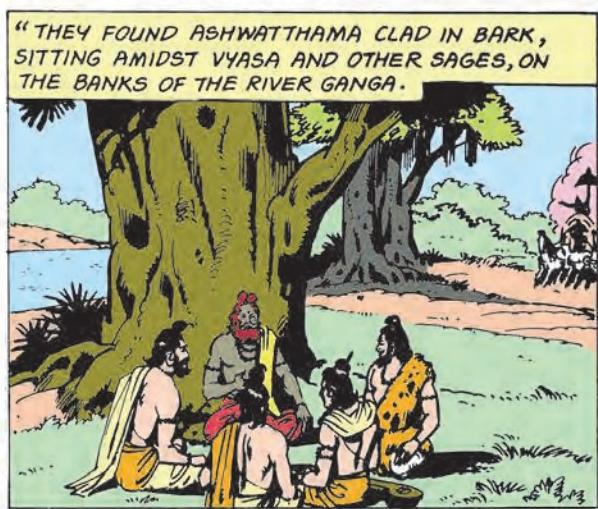
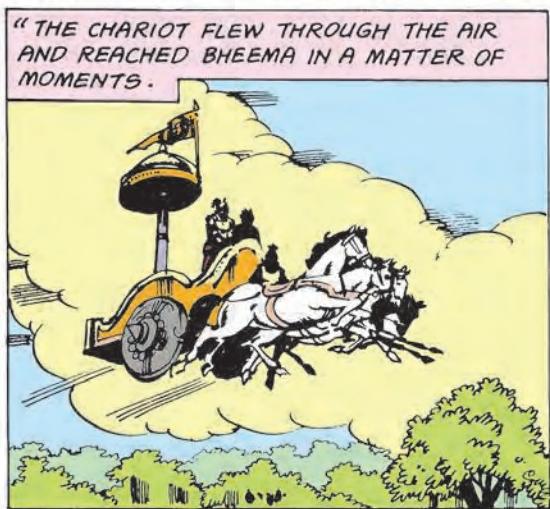
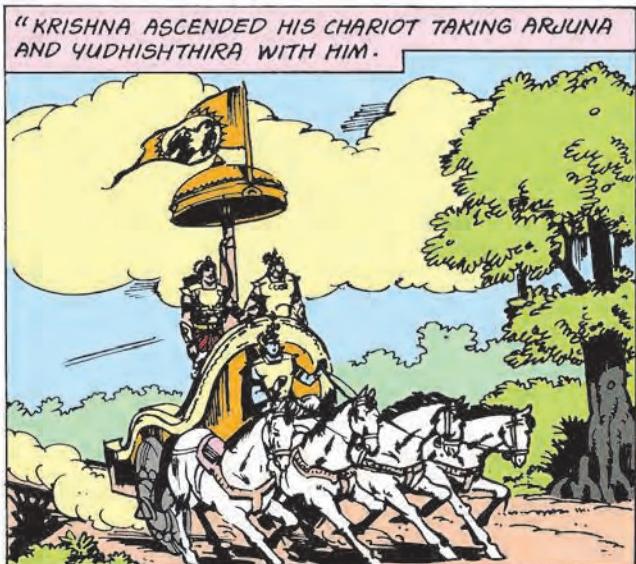
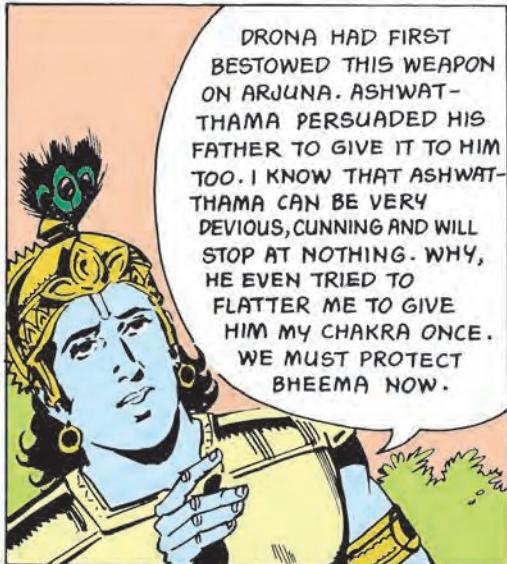
"WHEN SHE RECOVERED A LITTLE, SHE GLARED AT YUDHISHTHIRA, AND SAID—

SHOULD I CONGRATULATE YOU ON CONQUERING THE EARTH AFTER SACRIFICING YOUR SONS ?

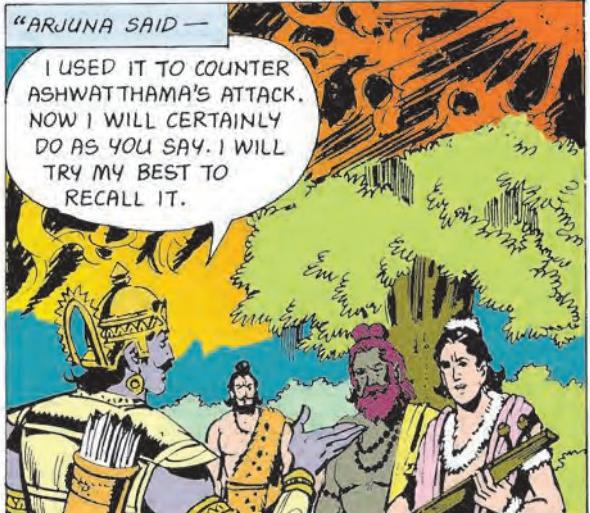
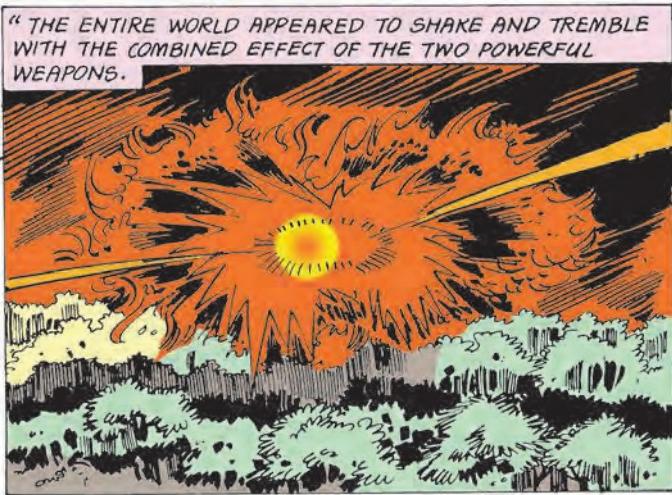
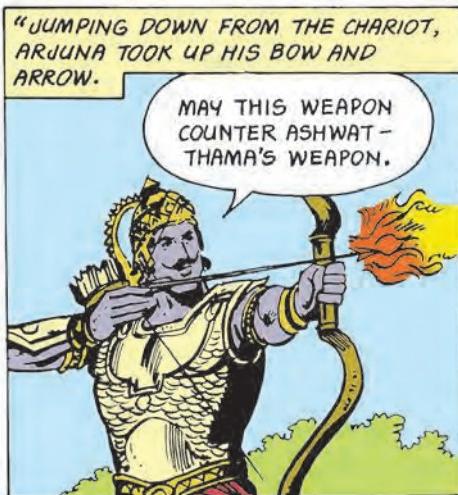


AFTER THE WAR





AFTER THE WAR



"IT WAS NOT AN EASY WEAPON TO RECALL. HAVING OBTAINED IT AFTER SEVERE AUSTERITIES, ARJUNA HAD THE POWER AND ABILITY TO WITHDRAW IT.



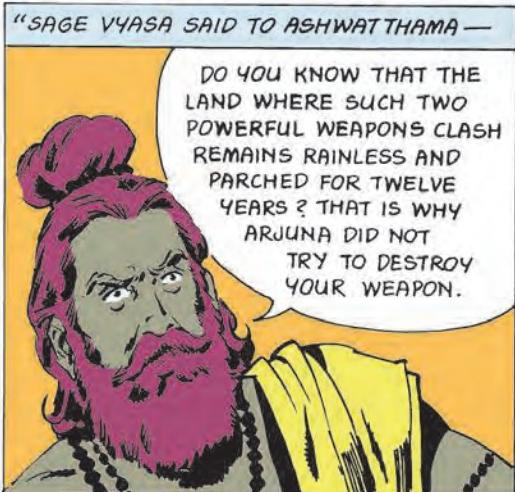
"ASHWATTHAMA HOWEVER COULD NOT DO SO, MUCH AS HE TRIED. HE APPEALED TO VYASA.

I USED THIS WEAPON IN FEAR OF BHEEMA, SAYING, NOW MAY ALL PANDAVAS BE DESTROYED. BUT NOW I CANNOT WITHDRAW IT.

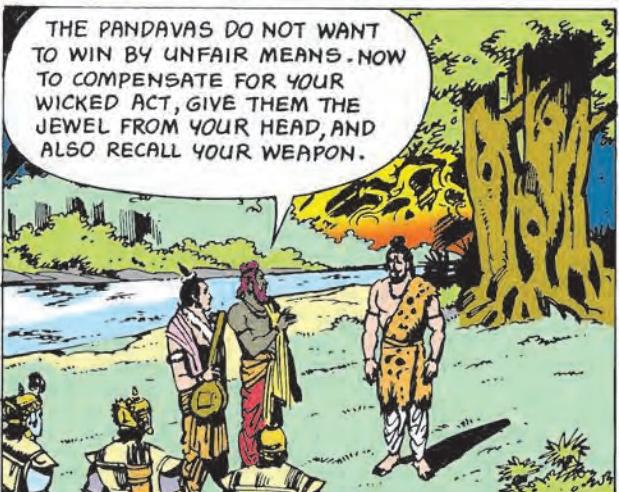


"SAGE VYASA SAID TO ASHWATTHAMA —

DO YOU KNOW THAT THE LAND WHERE SUCH TWO POWERFUL WEAPONS CLASH REMAINS RAINLESS AND PARCHED FOR TWELVE YEARS ? THAT IS WHY ARJUNA DID NOT TRY TO DESTROY YOUR WEAPON.



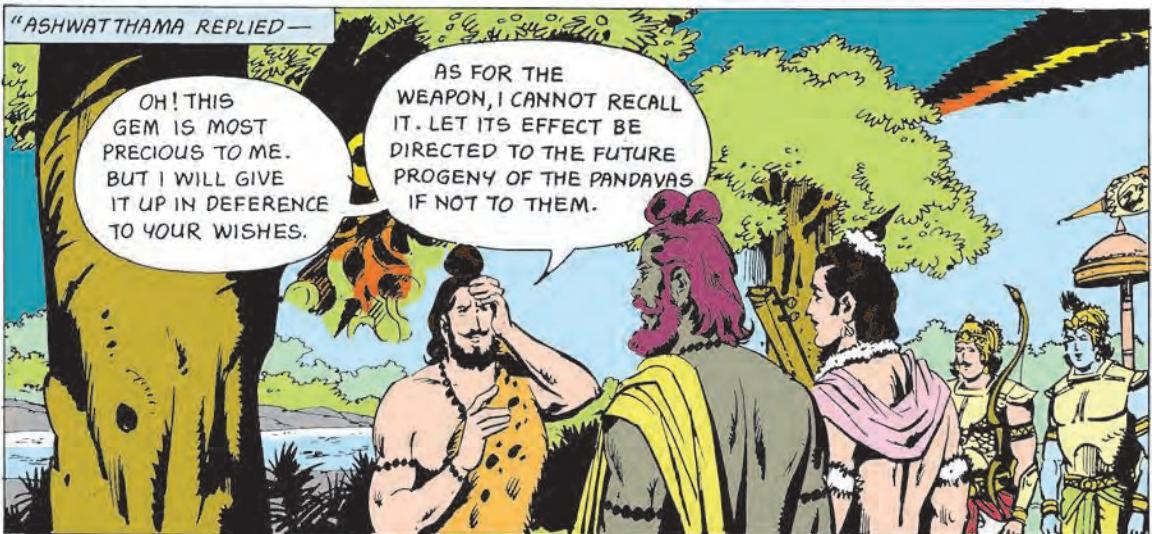
THE PANDAVAS DO NOT WANT TO WIN BY UNFAIR MEANS. NOW TO COMPENSATE FOR YOUR WICKED ACT, GIVE THEM THE JEWEL FROM YOUR HEAD, AND ALSO RECALL YOUR WEAPON.



"ASHWATTHAMA REPLIED —

OH ! THIS GEM IS MOST PRECIOUS TO ME. BUT I WILL GIVE IT UP IN DEERENCE TO YOUR WISHES.

AS FOR THE WEAPON, I CANNOT RECALL IT. LET ITS EFFECT BE DIRECTED TO THE FUTURE PROGENY OF THE PANDAVAS IF NOT TO THEM.

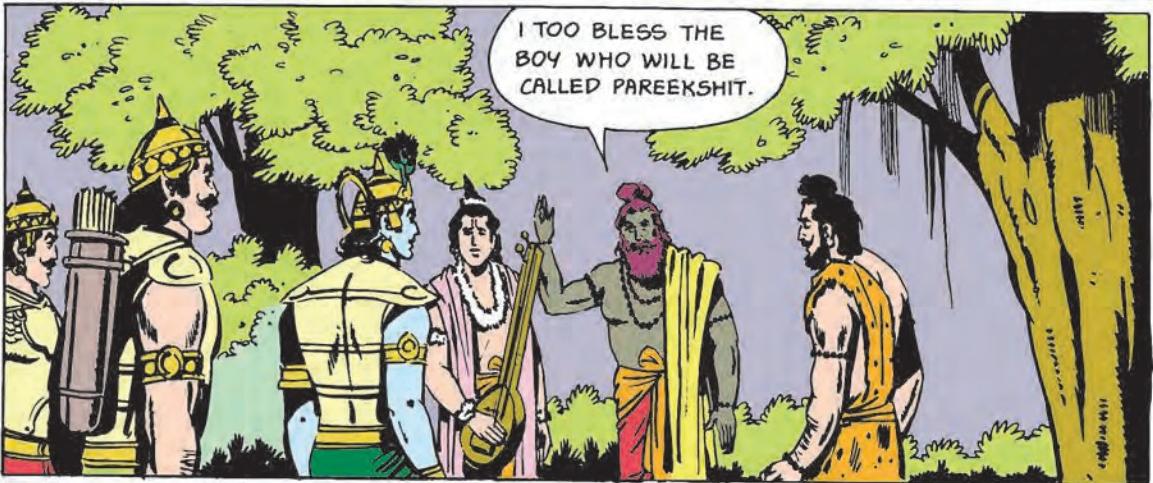
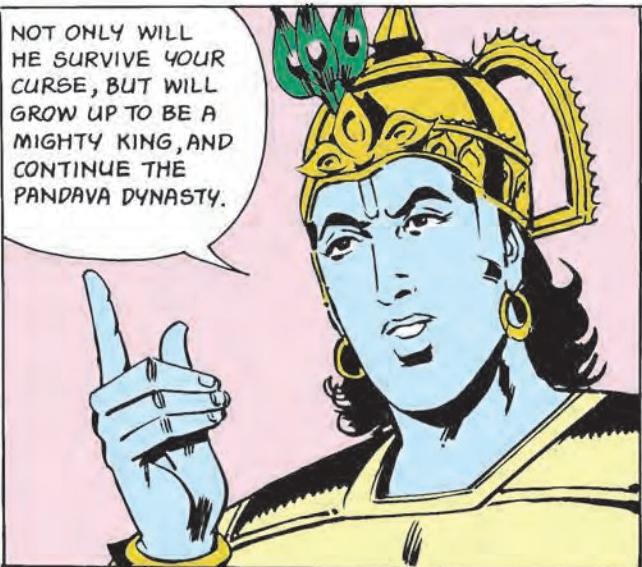


"ASHWATTHAMA'S CURSE WOULD HAVE  
AFFECTED THE UNBORN BABY OF  
UTTARA, ABHIMANYU'S WIDOW. BUT  
KRISHNA INTERVENED IN TIME —

YOU WICKED ASHWATTHAMA,  
DESPITE YOUR CURSE, THIS  
SON OF UTTARA WILL BE  
REVIVED AT BIRTH.



NOT ONLY WILL  
HE SURVIVE YOUR  
CURSE, BUT WILL  
GROW UP TO BE A  
MIGHTY KING, AND  
CONTINUE THE  
PANDAVA DYNASTY.



"THE PANDAVAS RETURNED IN HASTE  
TO DRAUPADI WITH THE PRECIOUS  
JEWEL. ASHWATTHAMA WENT  
MOROSELY INTO THE JUNGLE.



"BHEEMA PRESENTED THE GEM TO DRAUPADI.

NOW ASHWATTHAMA IS  
DEFEATED AND DEMORALIS-  
ED. BEING OUR GURU'S SON,  
WE HOWEVER, SPARED  
HIS LIFE.

O YUDHISHTHIRA.  
LET THIS GEM ADORN  
YOUR FOREHEAD NOW.

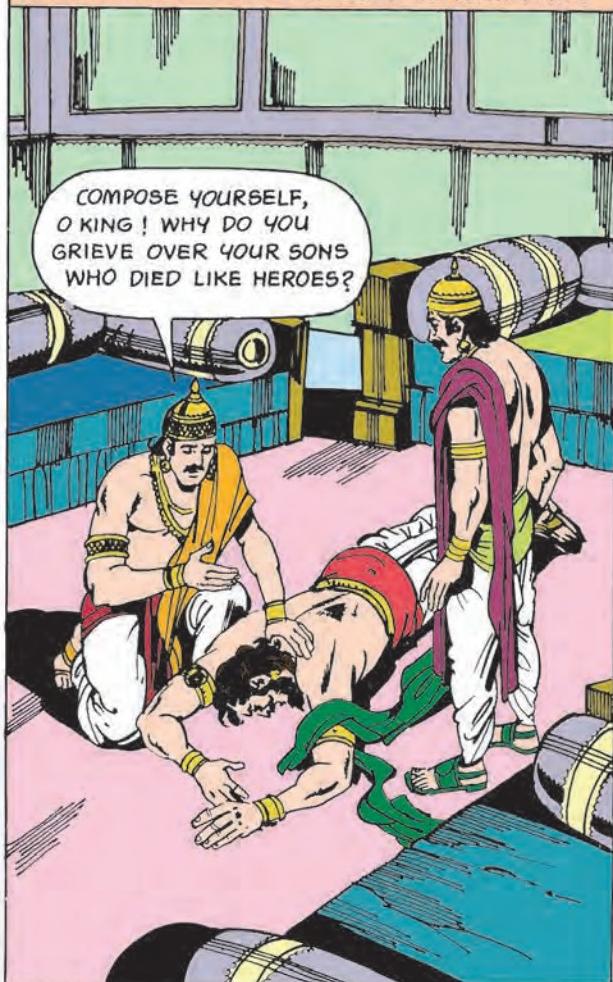
AS YOU  
WISH.



"MEANWHILE, THE OLD KING DHRITARASHTRA WAS PLUNGED IN DEEP SORROW. SANJAYA SAID TO HIM —



"DHRITARASHTRA THREW HIMSELF DOWN ON THE FLOOR. THE WISE VIDURA TRIED TO PACIFY HIM —

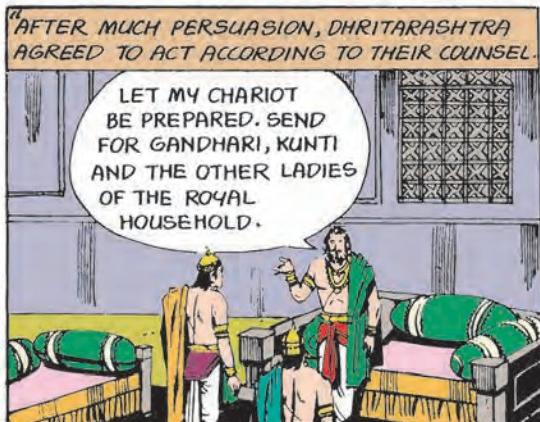
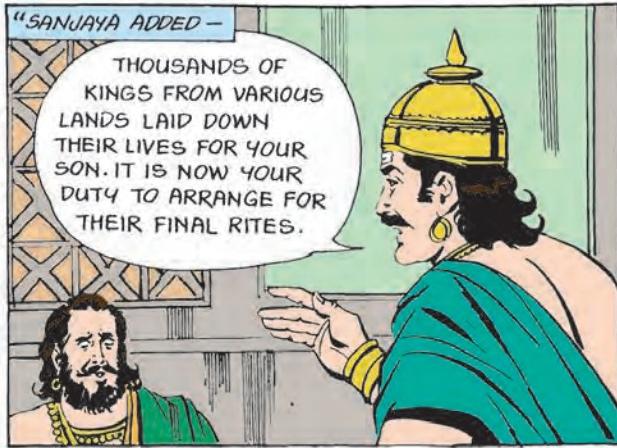
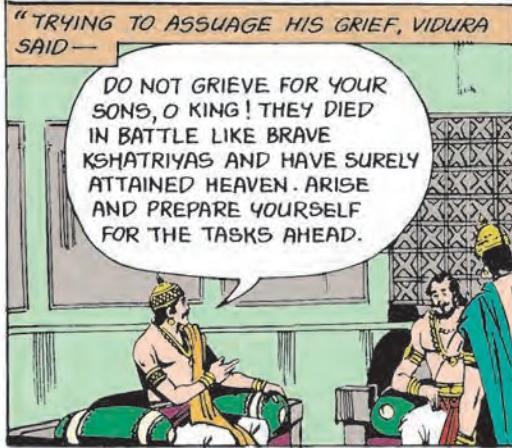


THUS ENDS THE THIRTY-NINTH SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA MAHABHARATA.

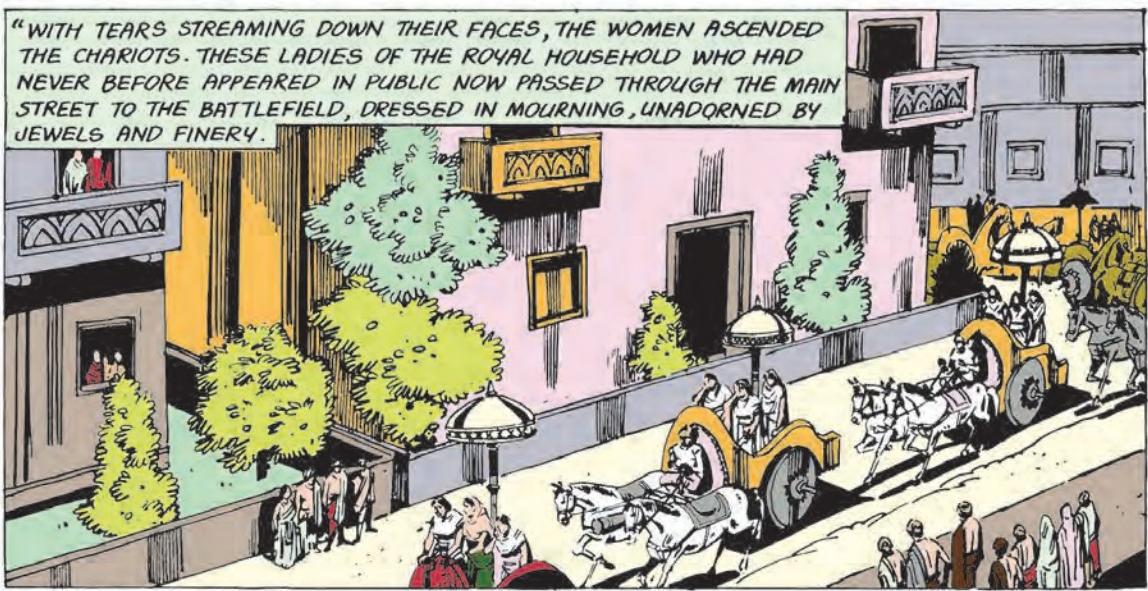
# Mahabharata - 40

YUDHISHTHIRA'S CORONATION

THE BLIND KING DHRITARASHTRA FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO GET OVER THE GRIEF CAUSED BY THE DEATH OF ALL HIS SONS AND WEPT INCONSOLABLY. VIDURA, THE WISE, GENTLY BADE HIM TO CONTROL HIS SORROW.



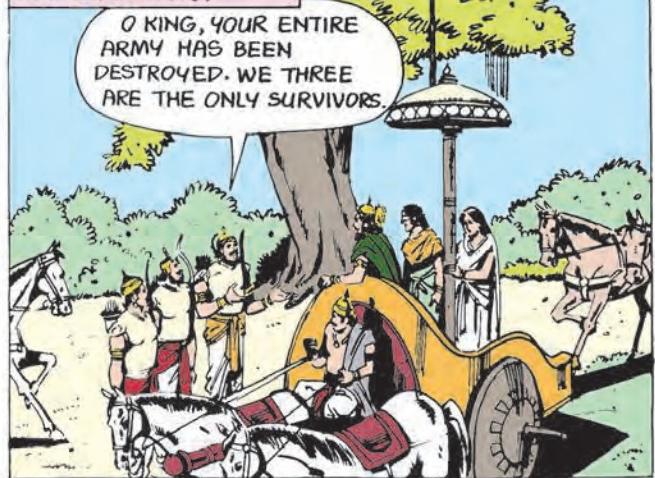
"WITH TEARS STREAMING DOWN THEIR FACES, THE WOMEN ASCENDED THE CHARIOTS. THESE LADIES OF THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD WHO HAD NEVER BEFORE APPEARED IN PUBLIC NOW PASSED THROUGH THE MAIN STREET TO THE BATTLEFIELD, DRESSED IN MOURNING, UNADORNED BY JEWELS AND FINERY.



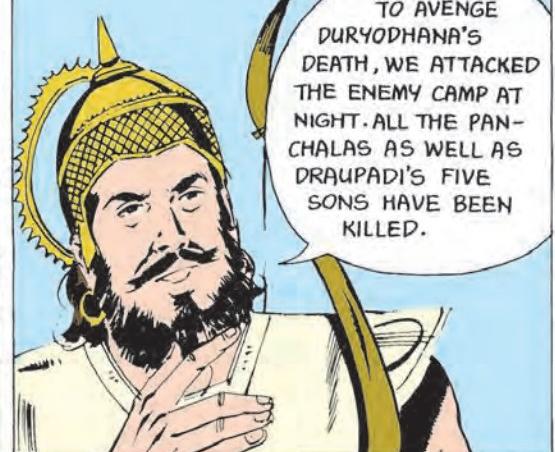
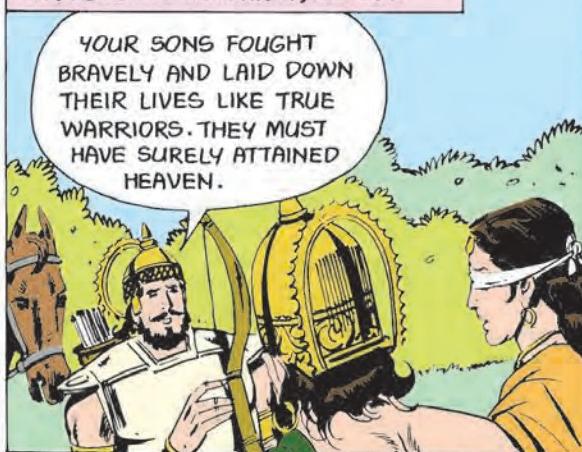
"ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF HASTINAPURA THEY MET KRIPACHARYA, KRITAVARMA AND ASHWATTHAMA.



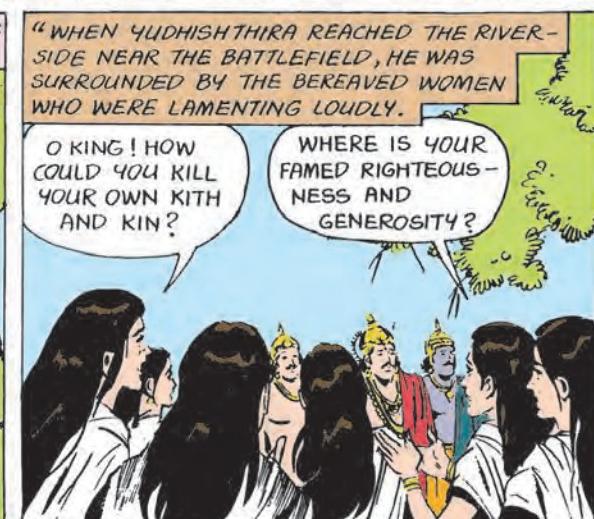
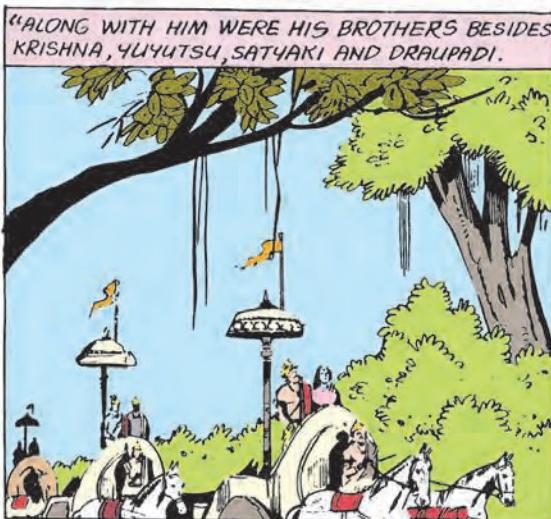
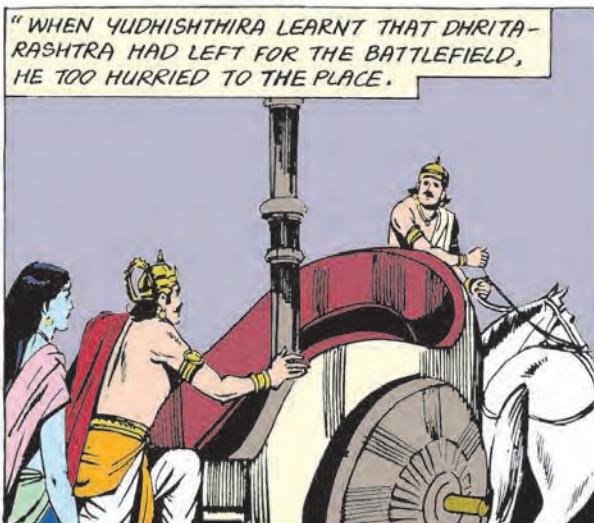
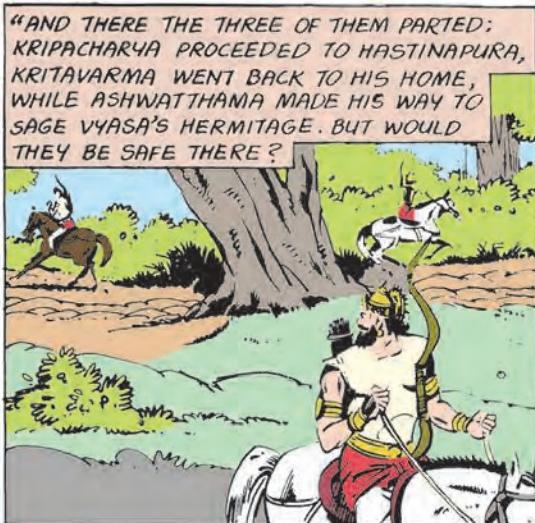
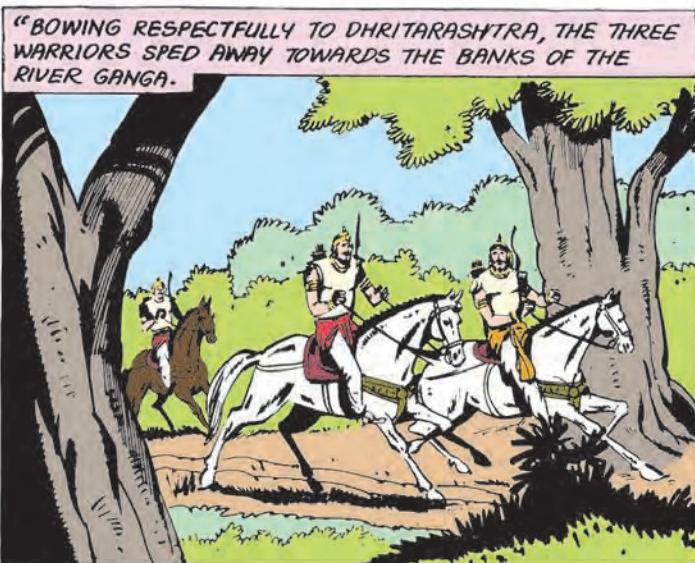
"KRIPACHARYA SAID TO DHRITARASHTRA —

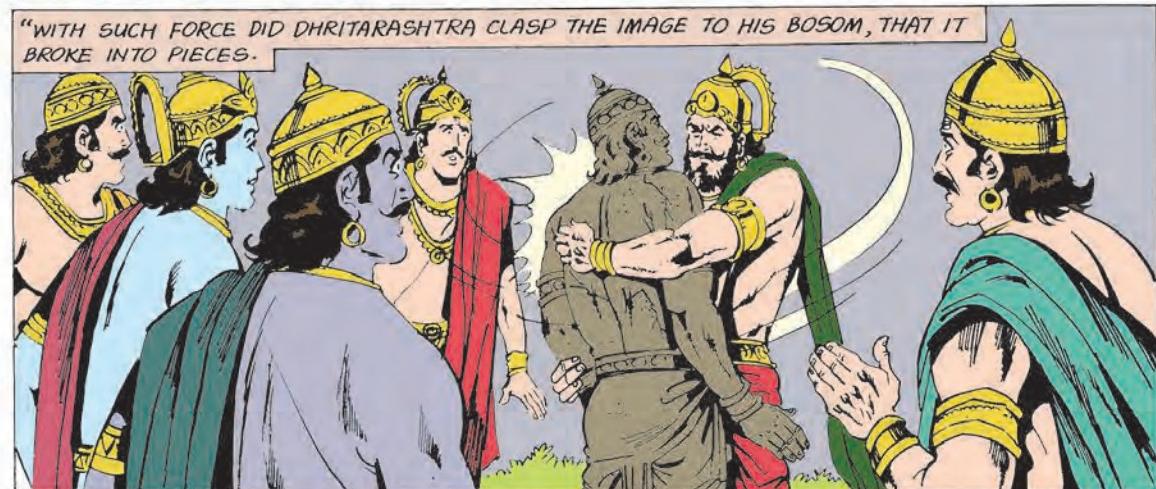
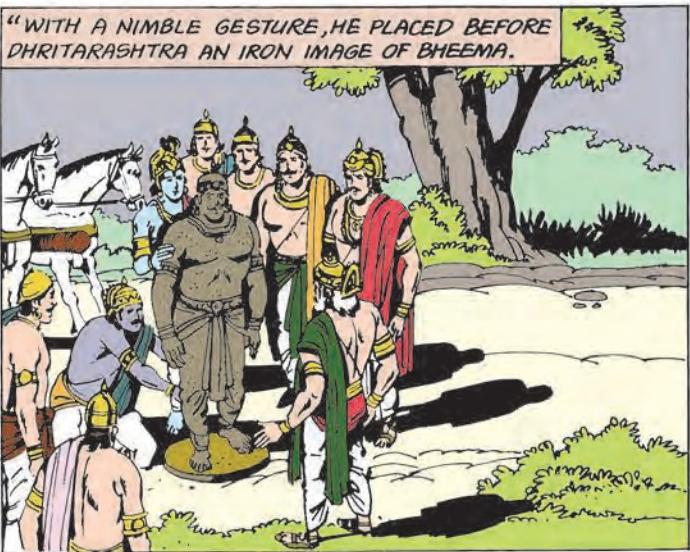
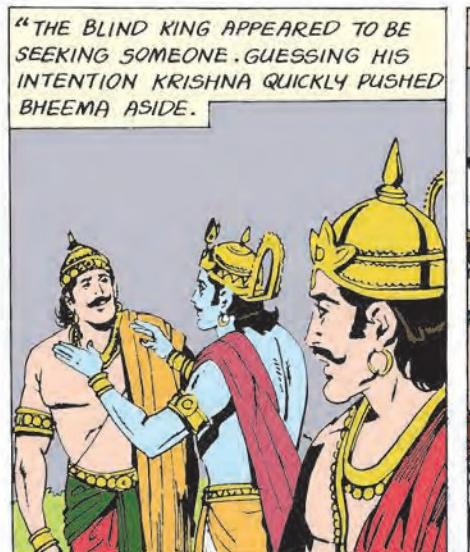
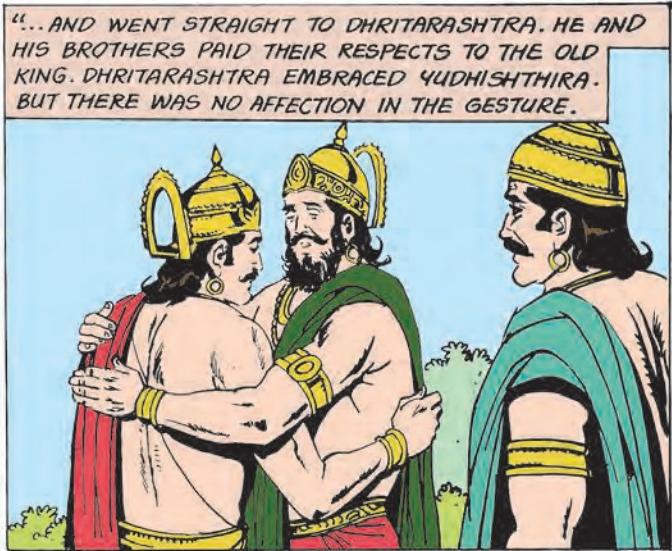
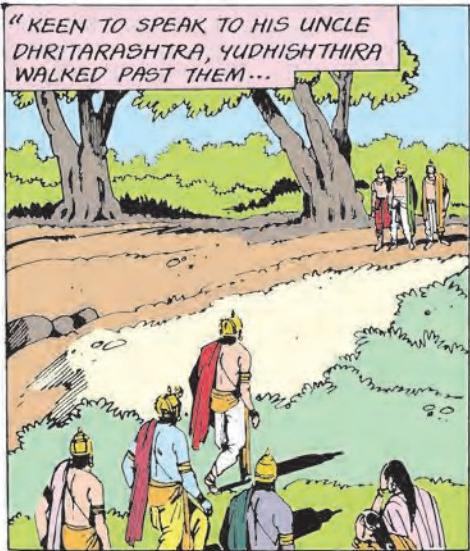


"ADDRESSING GANDHARI, HE SAID —



YUDHISHTHIRA'S CORONATION



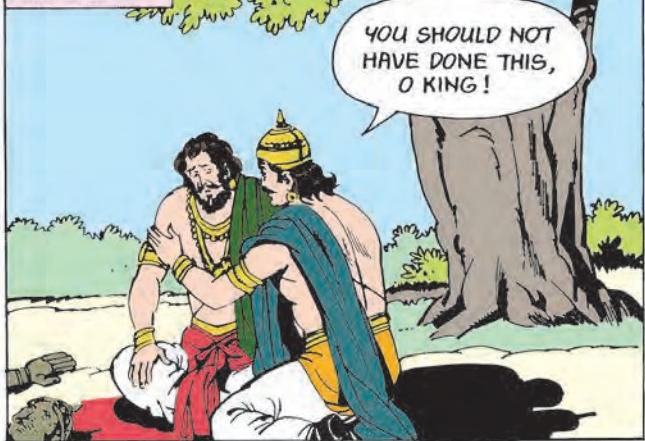


YUDHISHTHIRA'S CORONATION

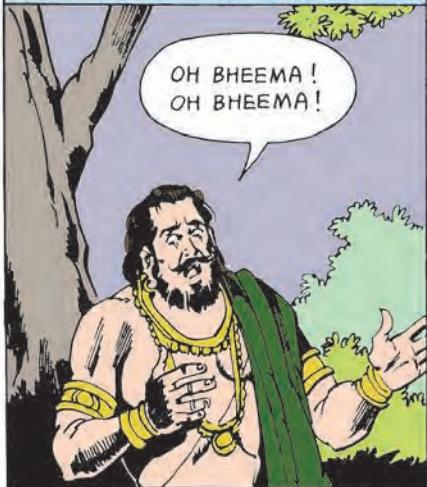
GASPING FOR BREATH AND WITH BLOOD STREAMING OUT OF HIS MOUTH, DHRITARASHTRA COLLAPSED.



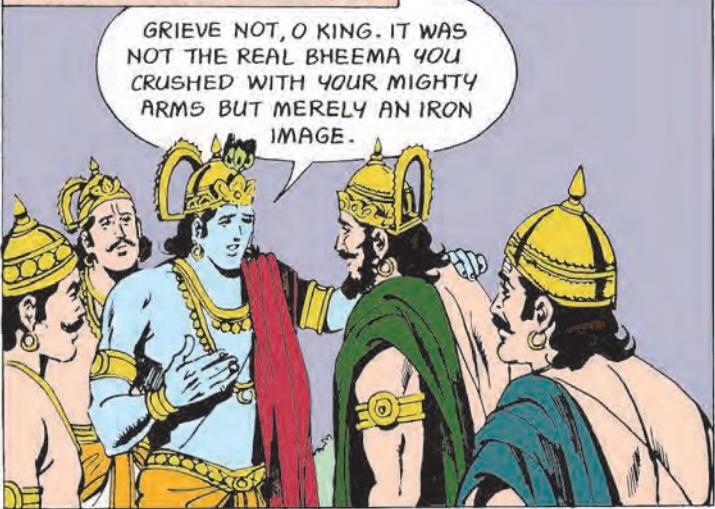
"THE FAITHFUL SANJAYA HELPED HIM TO GET UP AND SAID —



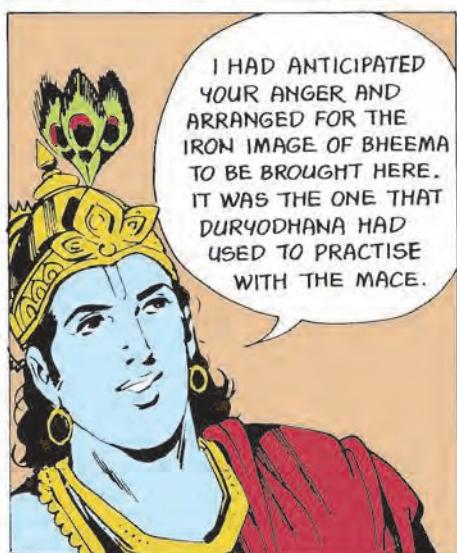
"HIS ANGER ABATED, DHRITARASHTRA WAS NOW FILLED WITH REMORSE.



"LORD KRISHNA CONSOLED HIM.

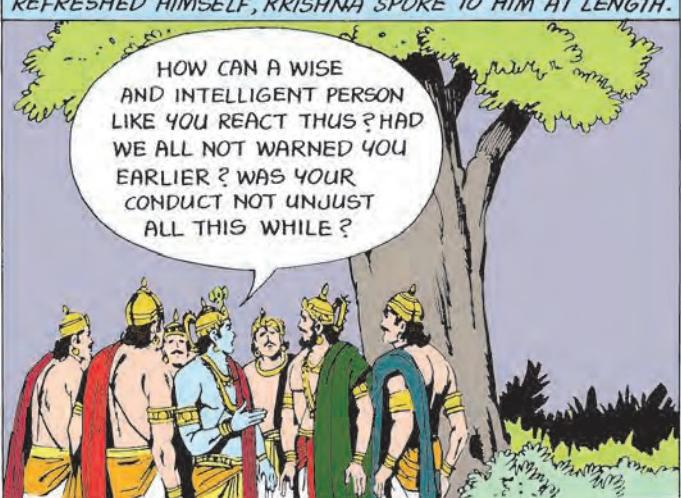


I HAD ANTICIPATED YOUR ANGER AND ARRANGED FOR THE IRON IMAGE OF BHEEMA TO BE BROUGHT HERE. IT WAS THE ONE THAT DURYODHANA HAD USED TO PRACTISE WITH THE MACE.



"AFTER DHRITARASHTRA HAD RESTED AWHILE AND REFRESHED HIMSELF, KRISHNA SPOKE TO HIM AT LENGTH.

HOW CAN A WISE AND INTELLIGENT PERSON LIKE YOU REACT THUS? HAD WE ALL NOT WARNED YOU EARLIER? WAS YOUR CONDUCT NOT UNJUST ALL THIS WHILE?

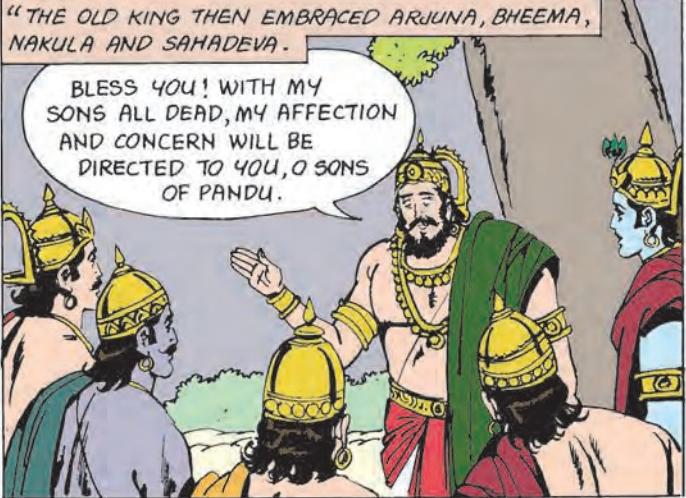
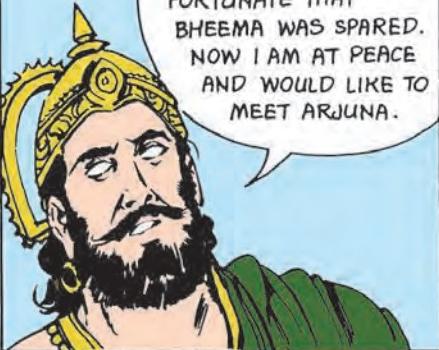


"DHRITARASHTRA ADMITTED —

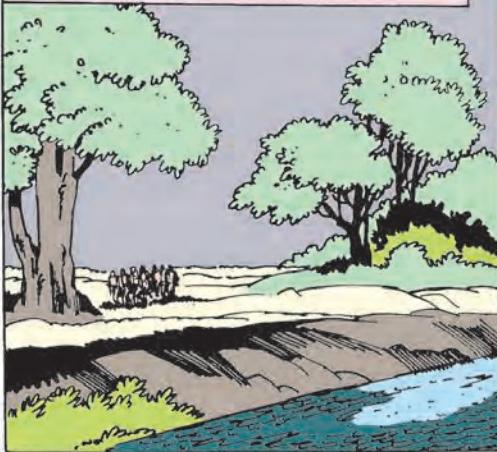
YOU ARE RIGHT. I WAS UNDER DURYODHANA'S INFLUENCE. IT IS INDEED FORTUNATE THAT BHEEMA WAS SPARED. NOW I AM AT PEACE AND WOULD LIKE TO MEET ARJUNA.

"THE OLD KING THEN EMBRACED ARJUNA, BHEEMA, NAKULA AND SAHADEVA.

BLESS YOU! WITH MY SONS ALL DEAD, MY AFFECTION AND CONCERN WILL BE DIRECTED TO YOU, O SONS OF PANDU.



"RESPECTFULLY TAKING LEAVE OF DHRITARASHTRA, THE PANDAVAS AND KRISHNA WENT UP TO GANDHARI.



"BURNING WITH SORROW OVER THE LOSS OF ALL HER SONS, GANDHARI WAS ABOUT TO UTTER A CURSE ON THE PANDAVAS.



"READING HER MIND, SAGE VYASA INTERVENED IN TIME.



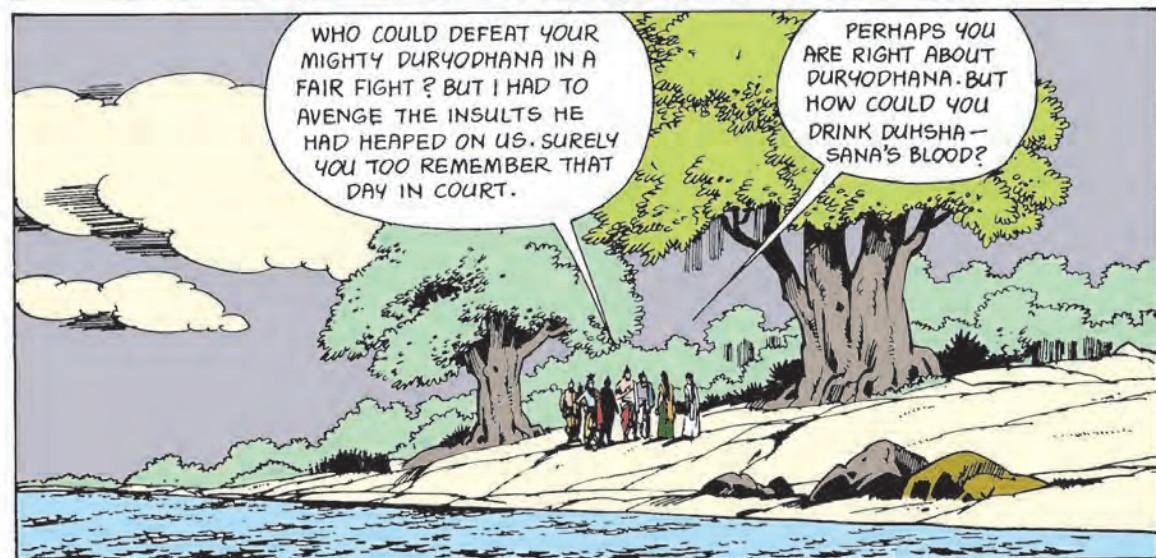
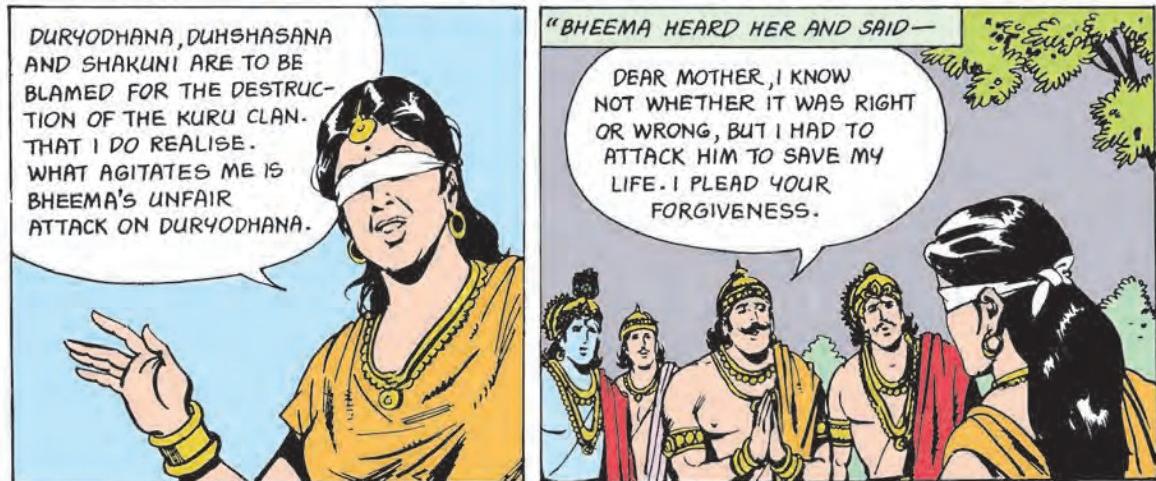
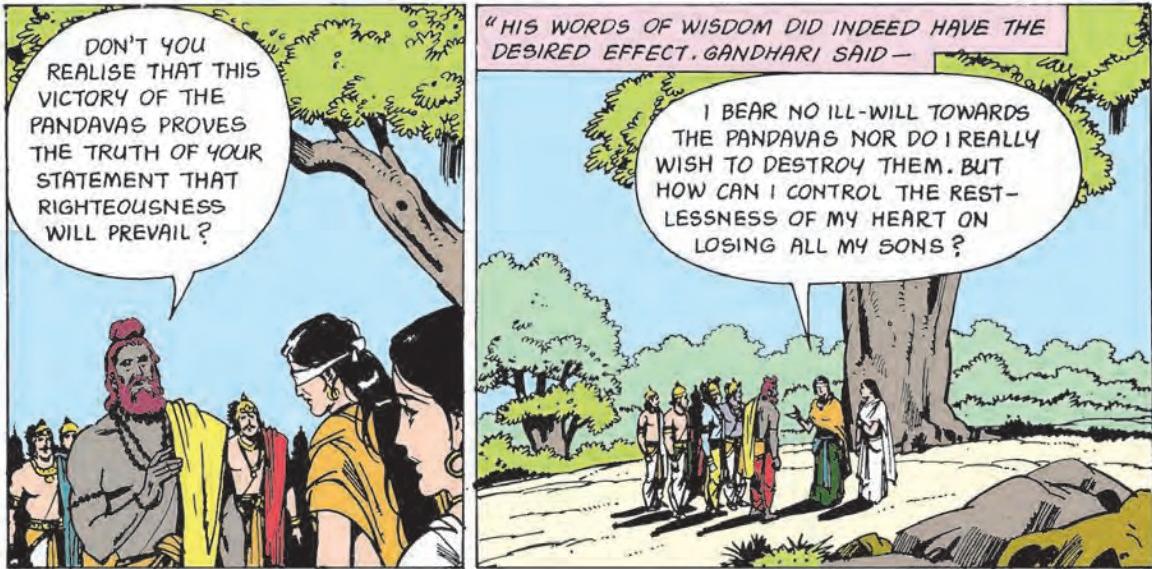
FOR THE LAST EIGHTEEN DAYS, YOUR SON DURYODHANA USED TO SEEK YOUR BLESSING BEFORE FACING THE ENEMY.

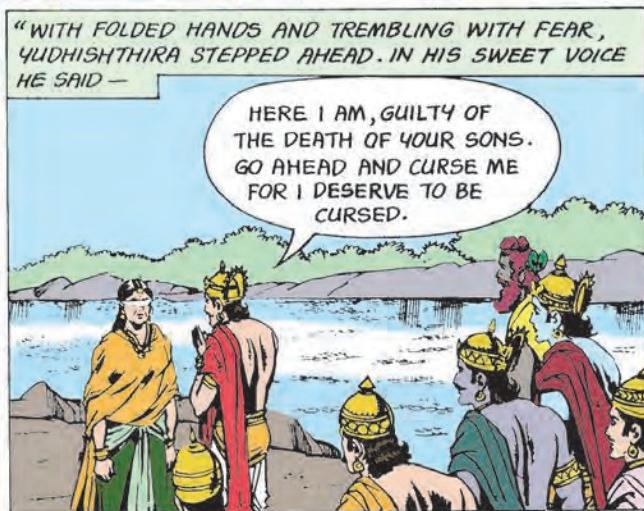
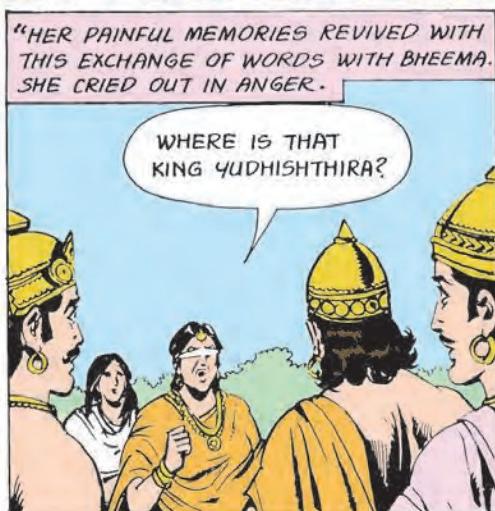
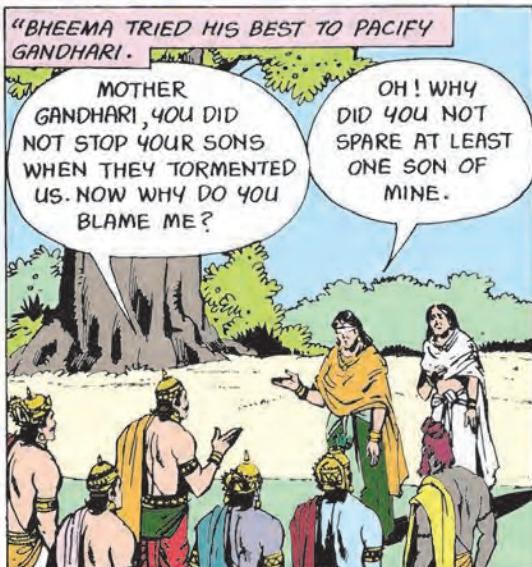
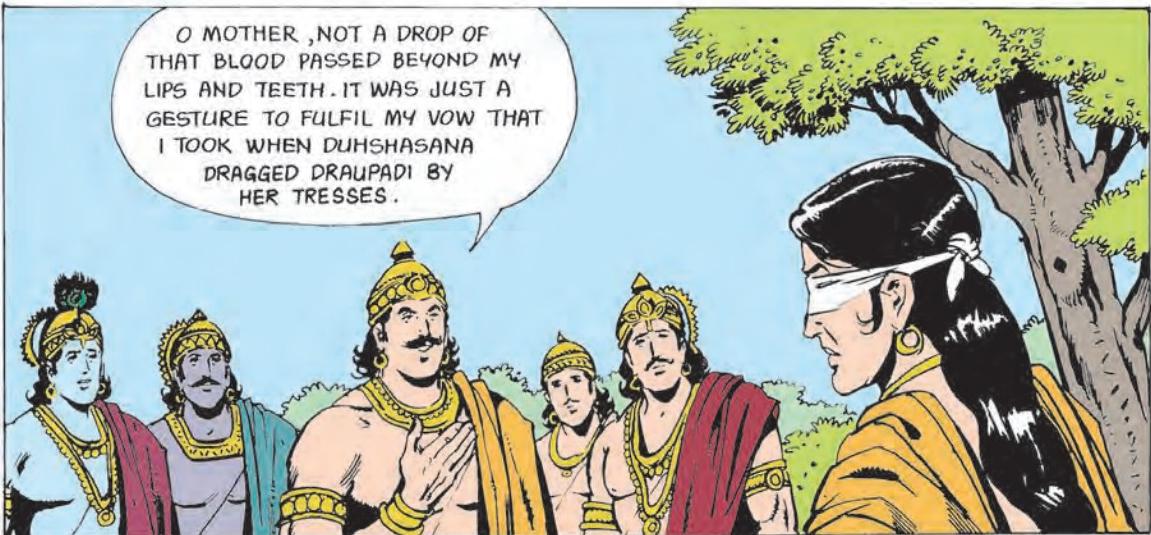


EACH DAY, YOU RIGHTLY TOLD HIM — WHERE THERE IS DHARMA\*, THERE WILL BE VICTORY.



YUDHISHTHIRA'S CORONATION





YUDHISHTHIRA'S CORONATION

"SEEING YUDHISHTHIRA SO PENITENT, GANDHARI'S ANGER VANISHED. SHE BEGAN INSTEAD TO SOB AND SIGH ALOUD.



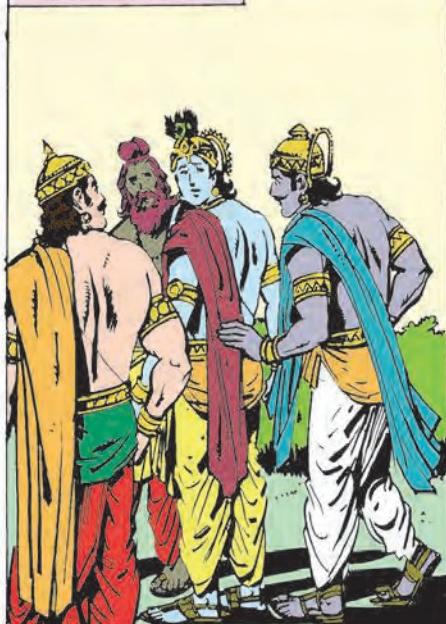
"AS YUDHISHTHIRA STOOD BOWING BEFORE HER, GANDHARI'S BURNING GAZE FELL ON THE TIP OF HIS TOES.



"SO INTENSE WAS THE POWER OF HER GAZE, THAT YUDHISHTHIRA'S BEAUTIFUL TOENAILS CHARRED THAT VERY INSTANT.



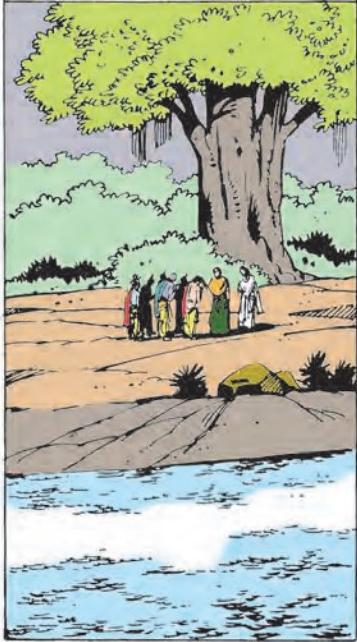
"AT THIS, ARJUNA BECAME AGITATED AND NOT KNOWING WHAT WAS TO BE DONE, QUICKLY HID BEHIND LORD KRISHNA IN FEAR.



"FROM BEHIND HER BLINDFOLD, GANDHARI COULD PERCEIVE HIS FLURRIED ACTION. THAT THE BRAVE ARJUNA COULD BE SO FEARFUL AND DESPERATE MADE GANDHARI'S TEMPER TURN TO MATERNAL CONCERN.



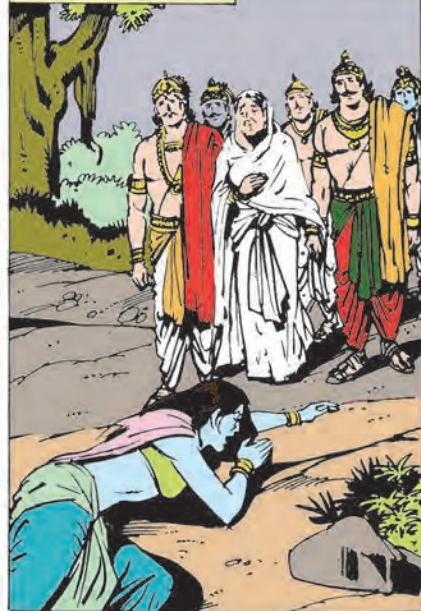
"WHEN THEY TOOK HER LEAVE TO GO TO THEIR MOTHER, SHE BLESSED THEM WITH AFFECTION."



"WHEN KUNTI BEHELD HER SONS AFTER MANY DAYS, HER EYES BRIMMED OVER WITH TEARS."



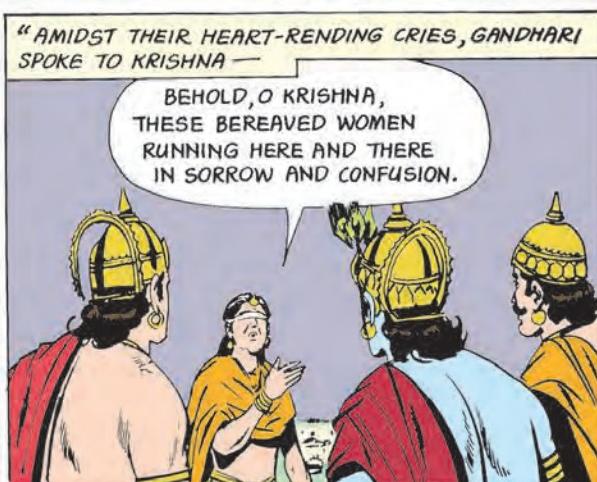
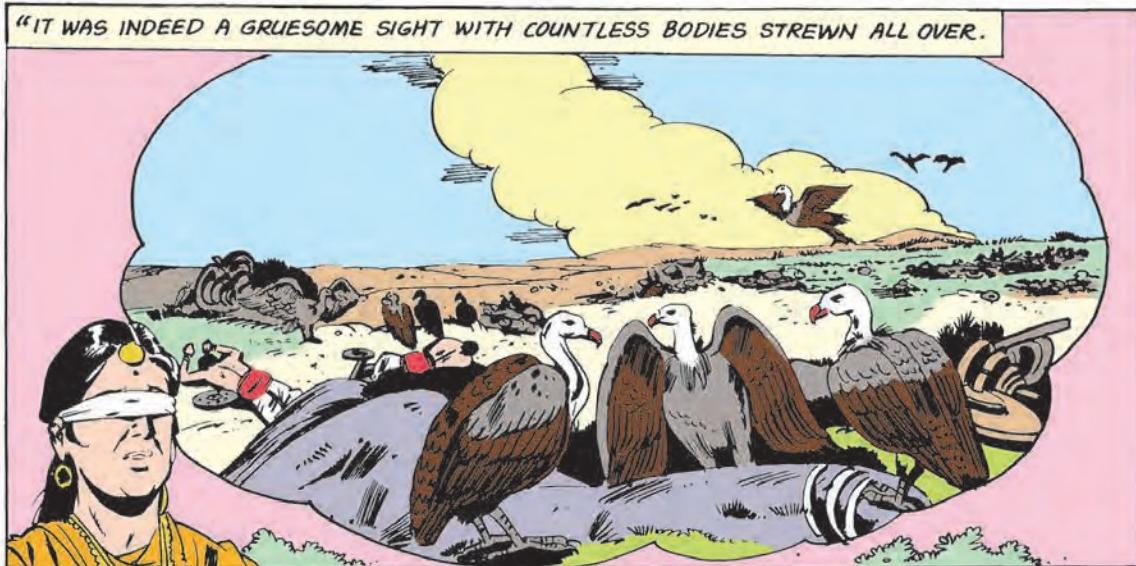
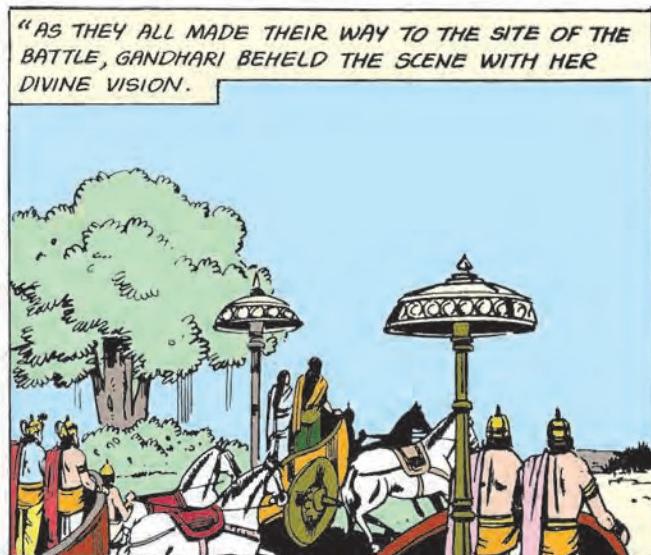
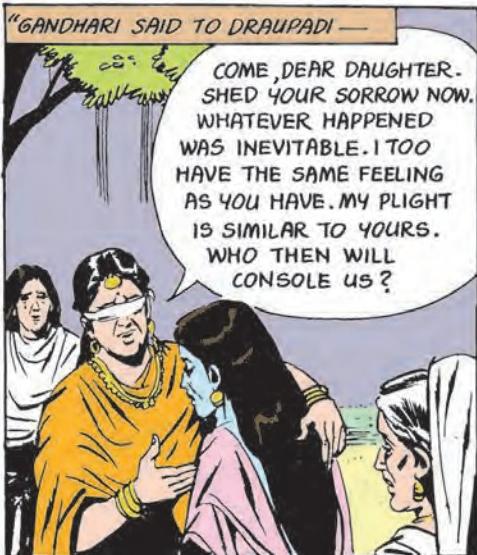
"GENTLY, SHE STROKED THEIR WOUNDS AND BEGAN LAMENTING FOR DRAUPADI, ALL OF WHOSE SONS HAD BEEN KILLED."



"SHARING THEIR GRIEF AND EMBRACING ONE ANOTHER, THEY WENT TO GANDHARI AGAIN."



YUDHISHTHIRA'S CORONATION



"WHEN SHE SAW DURYODHANA, GANDHARI COLLAPSED LIKE A FELLED TREE."



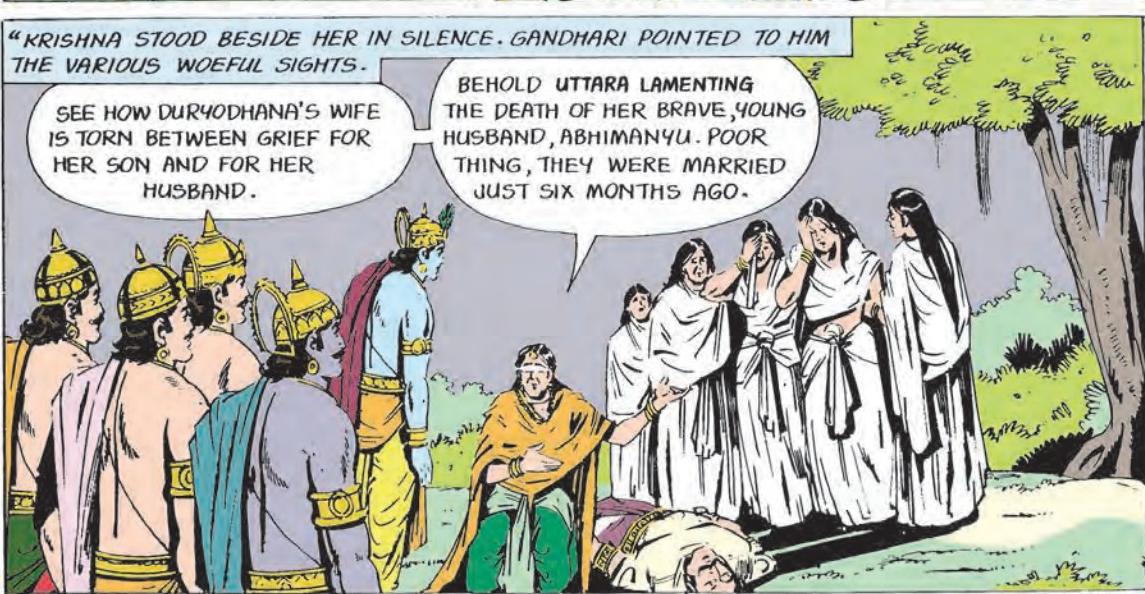
"ON RECOVERING, SHE HELD HIS LIFELESS FORM IN HER ARMS AND CRIED OUT."



"KRISHNA STOOD BESIDE HER IN SILENCE. GANDHARI POINTED TO HIM THE VARIOUS WOEFUL SIGHTS."

SEE HOW DURYODHANA'S WIFE IS TORN BETWEEN GRIEF FOR HER SON AND FOR HER HUSBAND.

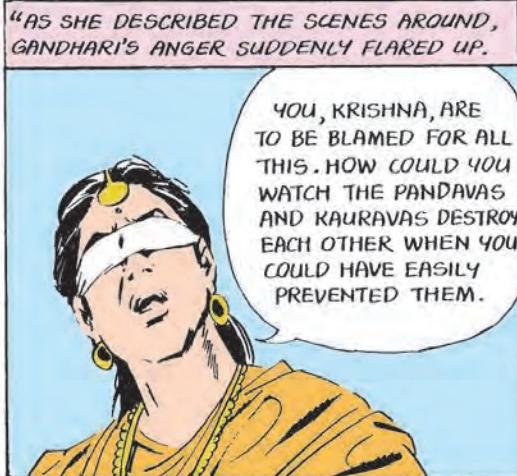
BEHOUD UTTARA LAMENTING THE DEATH OF HER BRAVE, YOUNG HUSBAND, ABHIMANYU. POOR THING, THEY WERE MARRIED JUST SIX MONTHS AGO.



"AS SHE DESCRIBED THE SCENES AROUND, GANDHARI'S ANGER SUDDENLY FLARED UP."

YOU, KRISHNA, ARE TO BE BLAMED FOR ALL THIS. HOW COULD YOU WATCH THE PANDAVAS AND KAURAVAS DESTROY EACH OTHER WHEN YOU COULD HAVE EASILY PREVENTED THEM.

YOU MUST ATONE FOR IT NOW. WITH ALL THE POWERS ATTAINED BY MY PENANCE, I CURSE YOU...



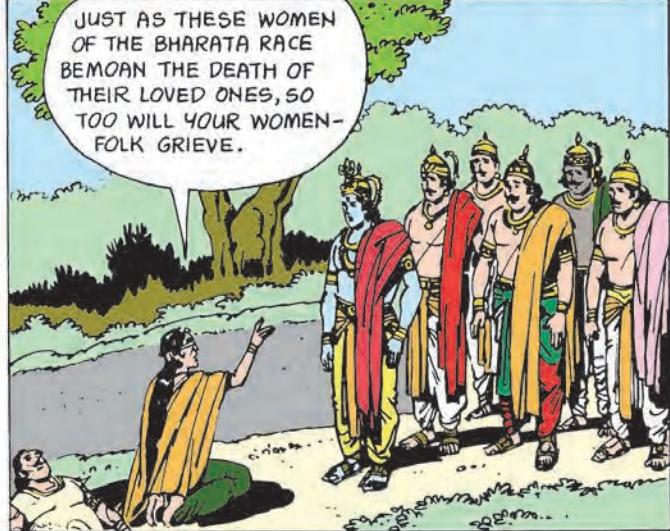
"GANDHARI SPENT OUT HER TERRIBLE CURSE."

...THIRTY-SIX  
YEARS FROM THIS  
DAY, YOUR FAMILY,  
YOUR MINISTERS,  
YOUR SONS, YOUR  
WHOLE CLAN WILL  
FIGHT AMONG  
THEMSELVES  
AND DIE.



FRIENDLESS AND ABANDONED,  
YOU TOO WILL WANDER  
ABOUT AIMLESSLY TILL  
YOU DIE AN INGLORIOUS  
DEATH.

JUST AS THESE WOMEN  
OF THE BHARATA RACE  
BEMOAN THE DEATH OF  
THEIR LOVED ONES, SO  
TOO WILL YOUR WOMEN-  
FOLK Grieve.

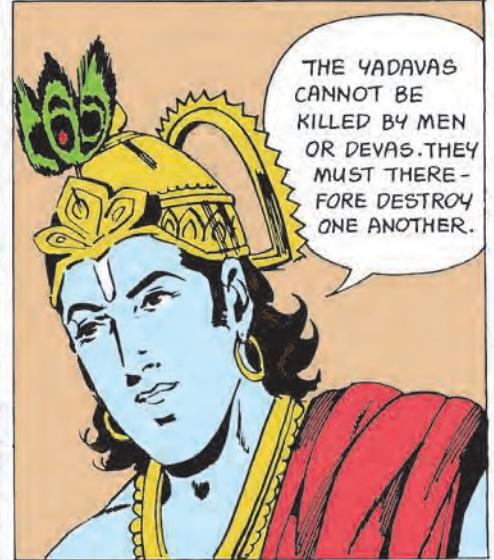


"BUT LORD KRISHNA MERELY SMILED, WHEN HE HEARD  
THIS HARSH PRONOUNCEMENT. HE SAID—

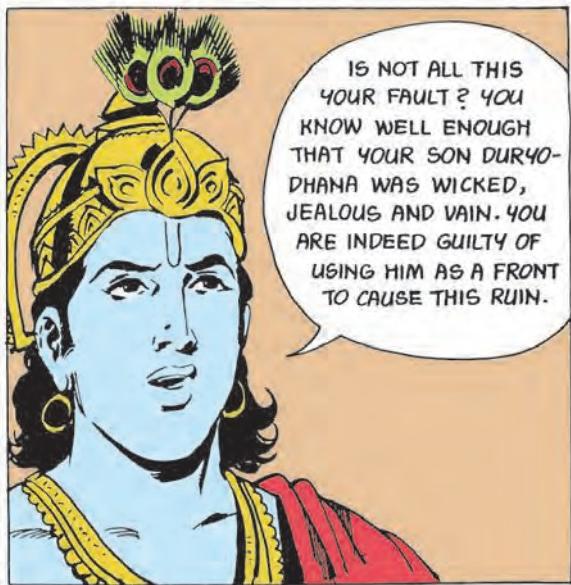
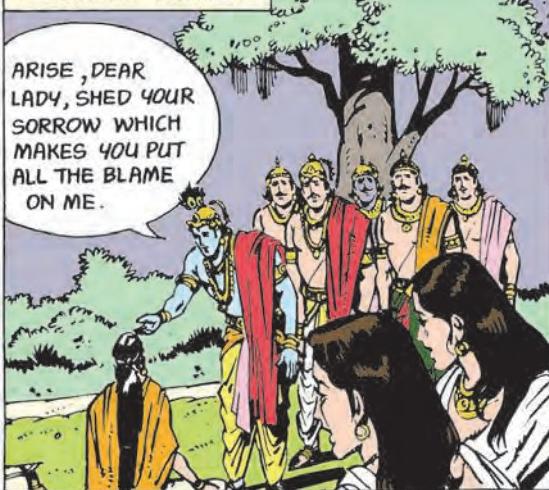
DEAR LADY, I KNOW  
THAT WHAT YOU SAID  
IS INEVITABLE. NO ONE  
BUT ME CAN CAUSE THE  
DESTRUCTION OF THE  
VRISHNI CLAN.



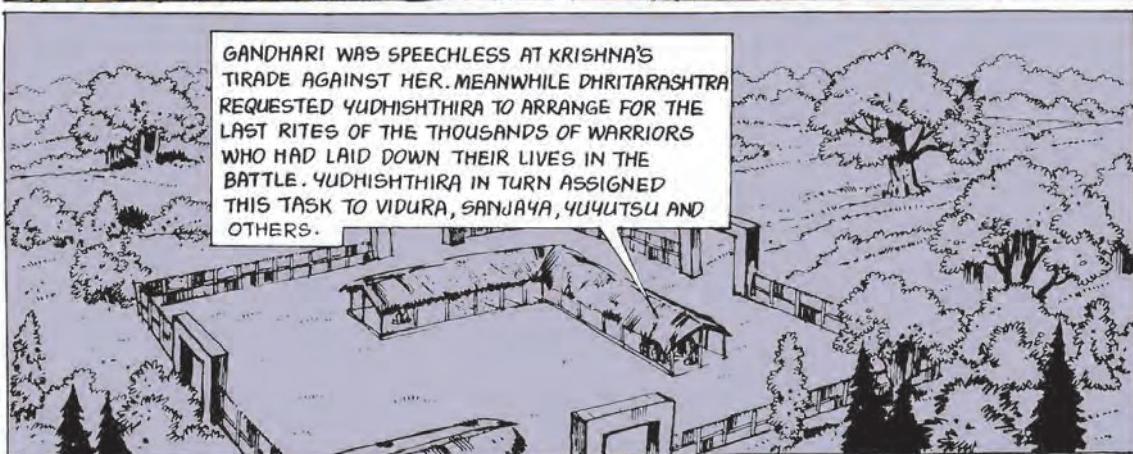
THE YADAVAS  
CANNOT BE  
KILLED BY MEN  
OR DEVAS. THEY  
MUST THERE-  
FORE DESTROY  
ONE ANOTHER.



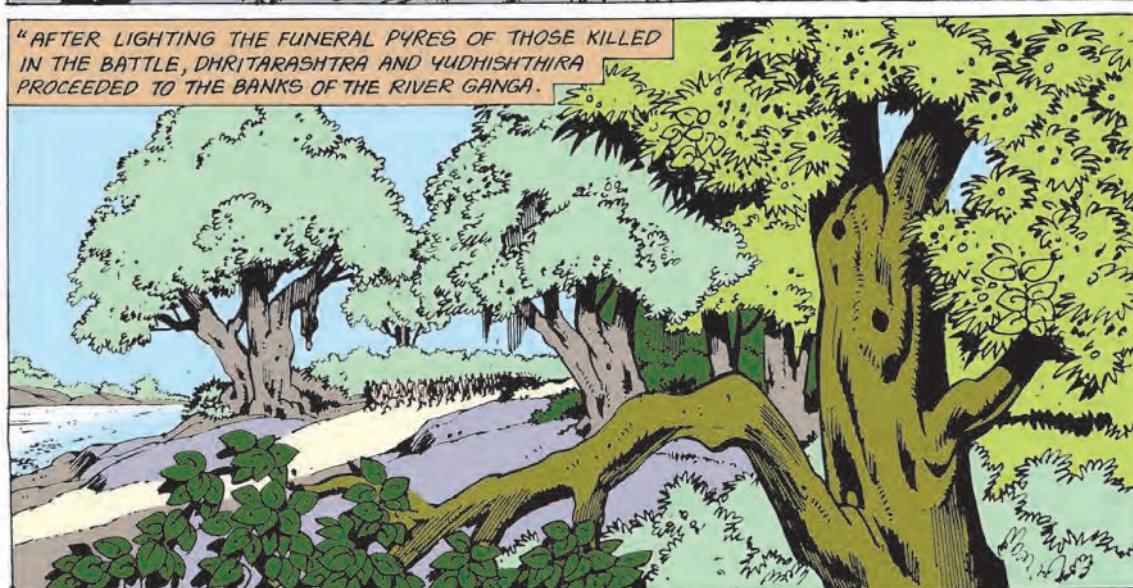
"THE PANDAVAS WERE GREATLY DISTURBED AT THIS EXCHANGE OF WORDS. KRISHNA, HOWEVER, CONTINUED CALMLY.



GANDHARI WAS SPEECHLESS AT KRISHNA'S TIRADE AGAINST HER. MEANWHILE DHRITARASHTRA REQUESTED YUDHISHTHIRA TO ARRANGE FOR THE LAST RITES OF THE THOUSANDS OF WARRIORS WHO HAD LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES IN THE BATTLE. YUDHISHTHIRA IN TURN ASSIGNED THIS TASK TO VIDURA, SANJAYA, YUYUTSU AND OTHERS.

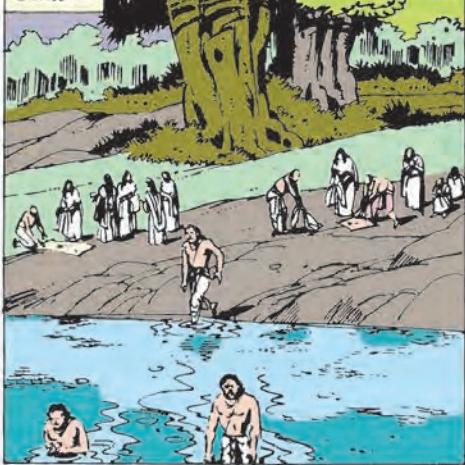


"AFTER LIGHTING THE FUNERAL PYRES OF THOSE KILLED IN THE BATTLE, DHRITARASHTRA AND YUDHISHTHIRA PROCEEDED TO THE BANKS OF THE RIVER GANGA.

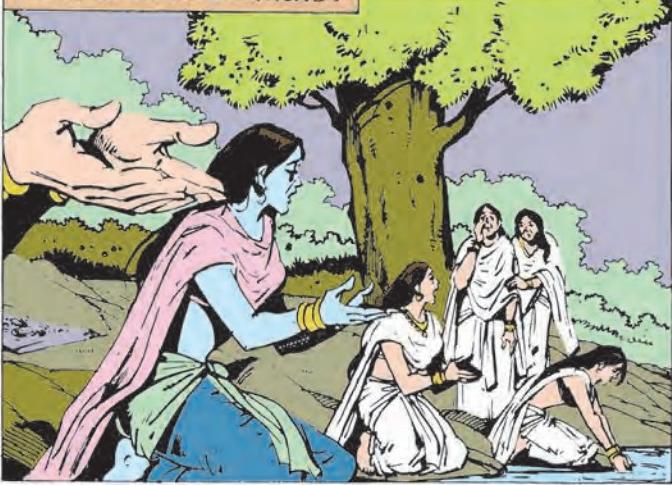


YUDHISHTHIRA'S CORONATION

"THE MEN LAID ASIDE THEIR JEWELS AND SILKS TO OFFER OBLATIONS TO THE DEAD."



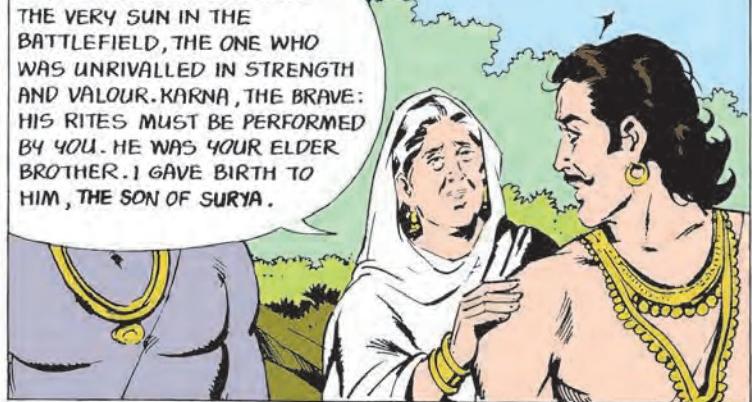
"THE WOMEN SHED COPIOUS TEARS AS THEY LIFTED THEIR PALMS TO OFFER OBLATIONS."



"JUST THEN, IN SOFT TONES, THE SORROWING KUNTI ADDRESSED HER SONS :

O PANDAVAS,  
THERE REMAINS ONE  
PERSON FOR WHOM  
YOU MUST MAKE  
OFFERINGS.

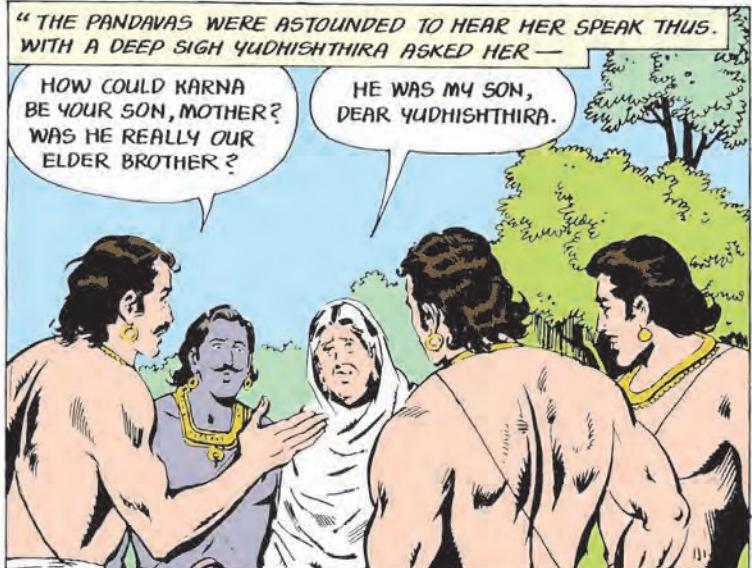
THE ONE WHO DEFIED ARJUNA, THE ONE WHO SHONE RESPLENDENT LIKE THE VERY SUN IN THE BATTLEFIELD, THE ONE WHO WAS UNRIVALLED IN STRENGTH AND VALOUR. KARNA, THE BRAVE: HIS RITES MUST BE PERFORMED BY YOU. HE WAS YOUR ELDER BROTHER. I GAVE BIRTH TO HIM, THE SON OF SURYA.

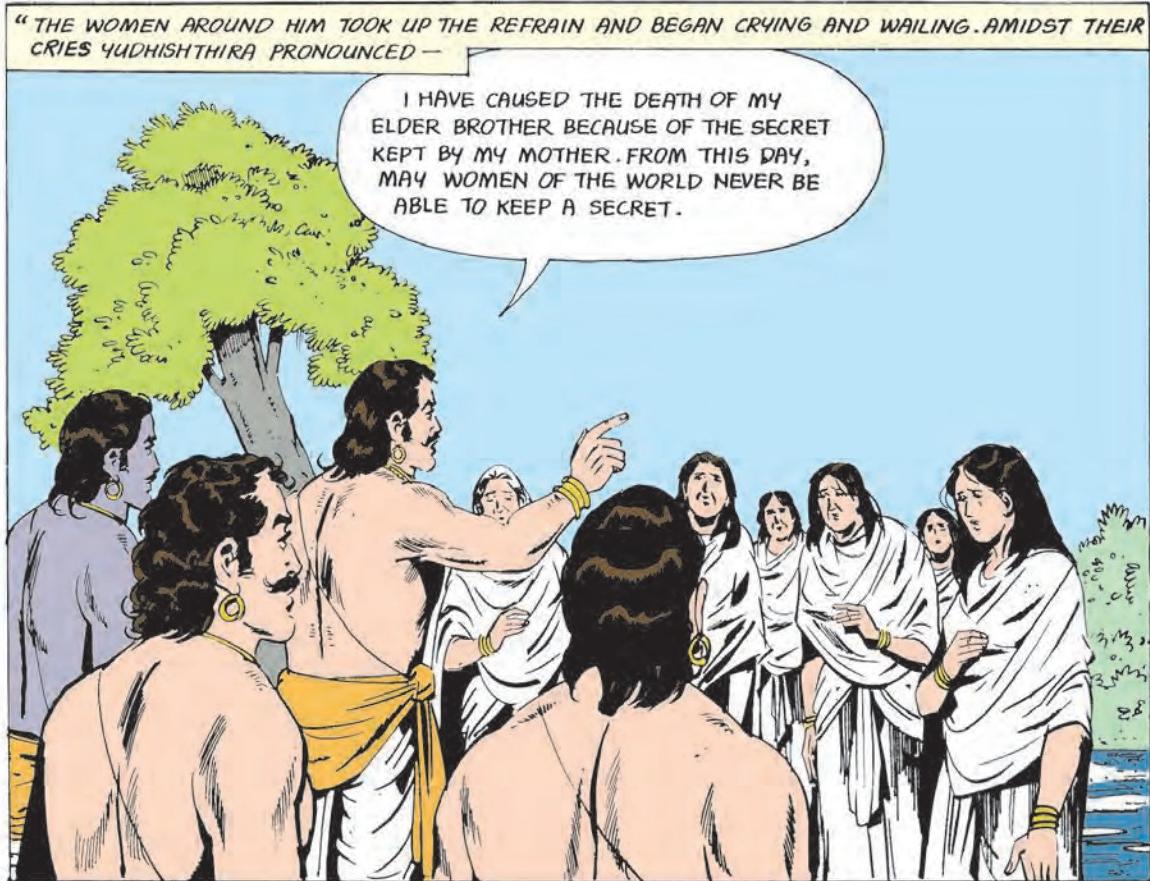
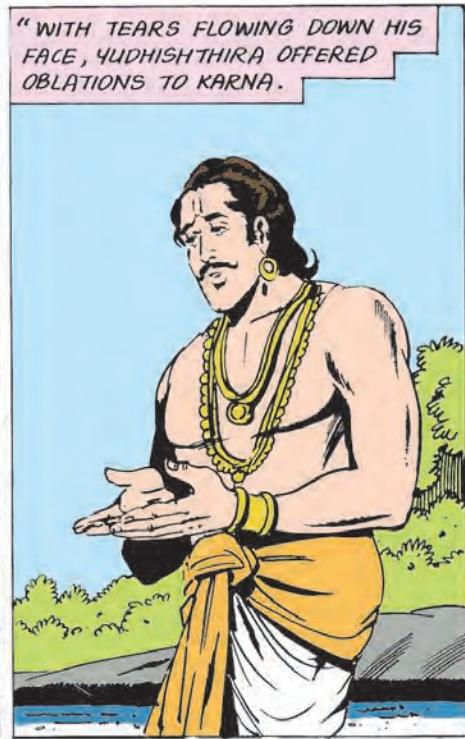
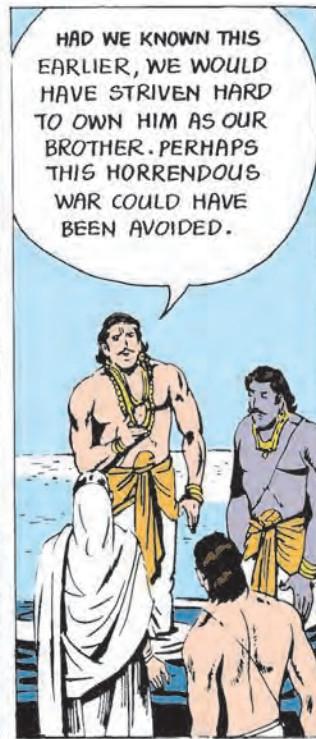
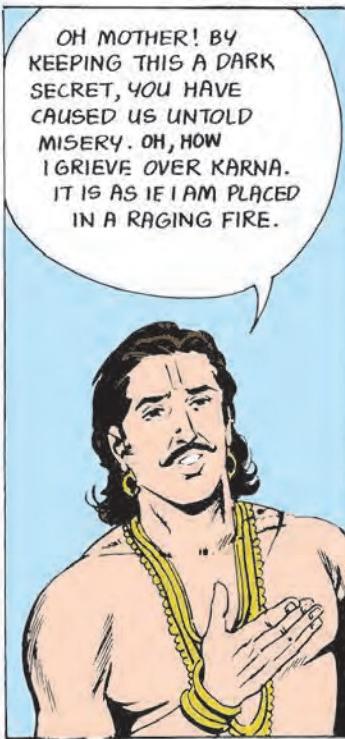


"THE PANDAVAS WERE ASTOUNDED TO HEAR HER SPEAK THUS. WITH A DEEP SIGH YUDHISHTHIRA ASKED HER —

HOW COULD KARNA BE YOUR SON, MOTHER? WAS HE REALLY OUR ELDER BROTHER?

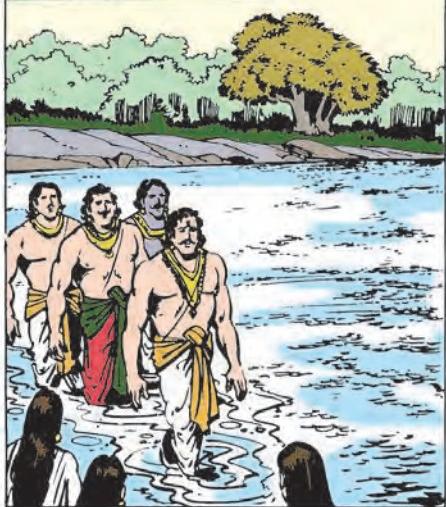
HE WAS MY SON, DEAR YUDHISHTHIRA.



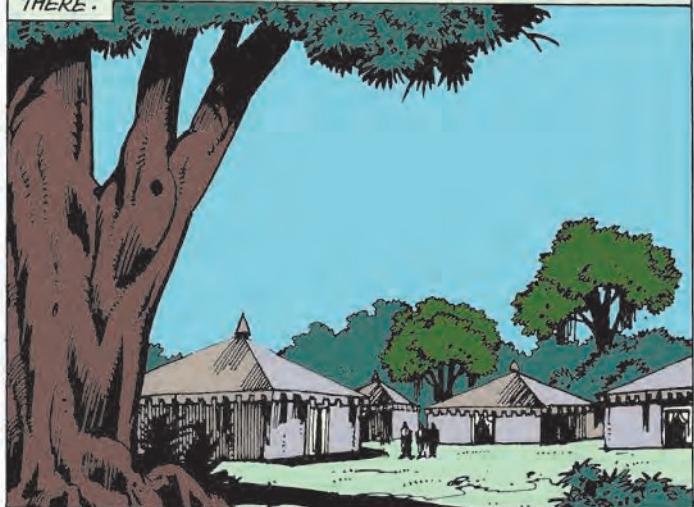


YUDHISHTHIRA'S CORONATION

"WITH THESE WORDS, YUDHISHTHIRA STEPPED OUT OF THE WATER, FOLLOWED BY HIS BROTHERS.



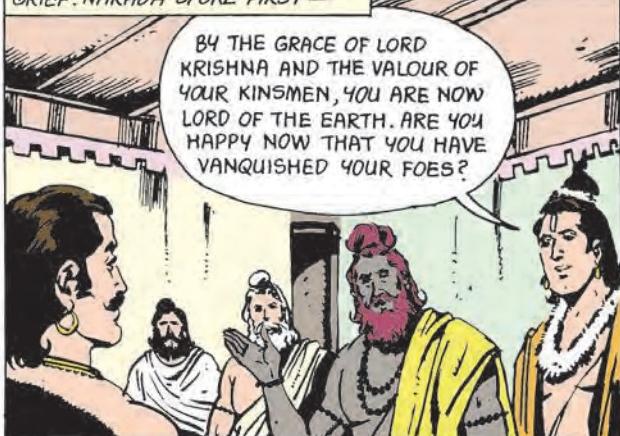
"AFTER THE FUNERAL RITES WERE OVER, THE PANDAVAS DECIDED TO STAY AWAY FROM THE CITY FOR A MONTH. SO THEY SET UP CAMP ON THE BANK OF THE GANGA AND LIVED THERE.



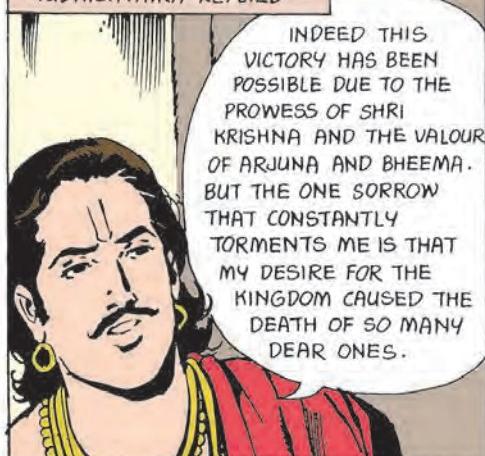
"AT THIS TEMPORARY ABODE, YUDHISHTHIRA WAS VISITED BY SEVERAL SAGES INCLUDING VYASA, NARADA AND KANVA.



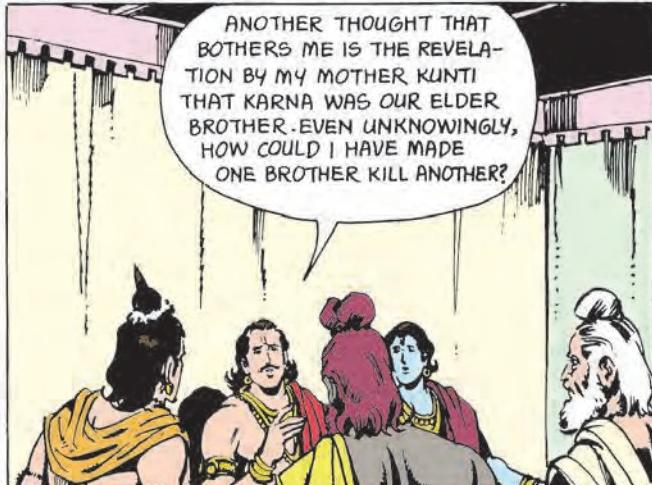
"SEVERAL SCHOLARS, BRAHMANAS AND HOUSEHOLDERS CAME TO VISIT YUDHISHTHIRA AND CONSOLE HIM IN HIS GRIEF. NARADA SPOKE FIRST —



"YUDHISHTHIRA REPLIED —



ANOTHER THOUGHT THAT BOthers me is the revelation by my mother Kunti that Karna was our elder brother. Even unknowingly, how could I have made one brother kill another?



"YUDHISHTHIRA'S THOUGHTS WENT BACK TO THE PAST.

I REMEMBER THAT DAY IN THE COURT AT HASTINAPURA. HOW MY ANGER VANISHED WHEN I BEHELD KARNA, ESPECIALLY WHEN I SAW HIS FEET. THEY REMINDED ME OF MOTHER KUNTI'S FEET AND I WAS PUZZLED BY THE SIMILARITY.

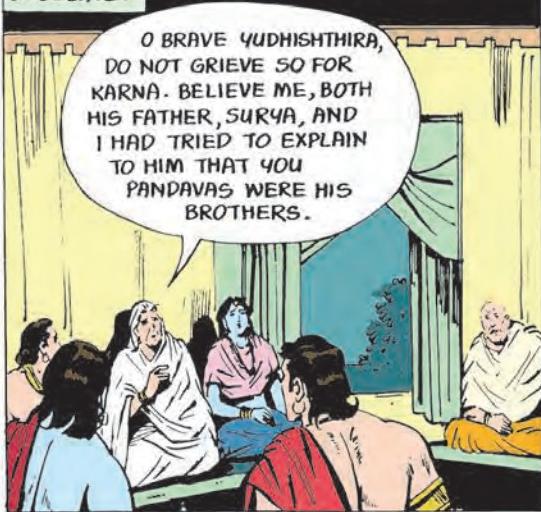
"YUDHISHTHIRA'S MIND WAS AGITATED WITH MANY QUESTIONS AND HE ASKED VYASA ABOUT THEM.

BUT WHY DID KARNA'S CHARIOT WHEEL GET STUCK IN THE GROUND? DO TELL ME ALL THIS IN DETAIL.

"SAGE VYASA THEN NARRATED TO YUDHISHTHIRA THE STORY OF HOW KARNA CAME UNDER A CURSE.

YOU HAVE KILLED MY COW. I CURSE YOU THAT WHEN YOU FIGHT A CRUCIAL BATTLE, THE WHEELS OF YOUR CHARIOT WILL GET STUCK IN THE GROUND AND YOU WILL BE KILLED.

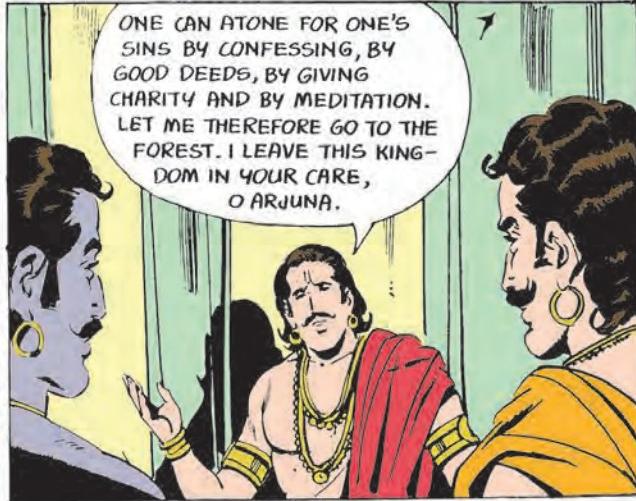
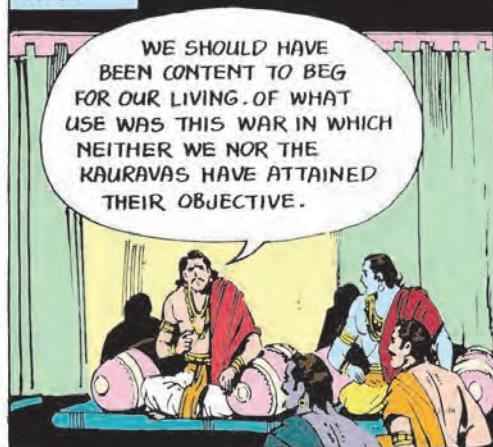
"YUDHISHTHIRA WAS HOWEVER PLUNGED IN A DEEPER GLOOM ON HEARING THE STORY FROM VYASA. KUNTI COULD NOT BEAR TO SEE HIM SO DESOLATE.



"YUDHISHTHIRA WAS TOO AGITATED AND UNHAPPY TO BE THUS CONSOLED. REPEATING HIS EARLIER CURSE ON WOMEN, HE SAT THERE SIGHING DEEPLY.



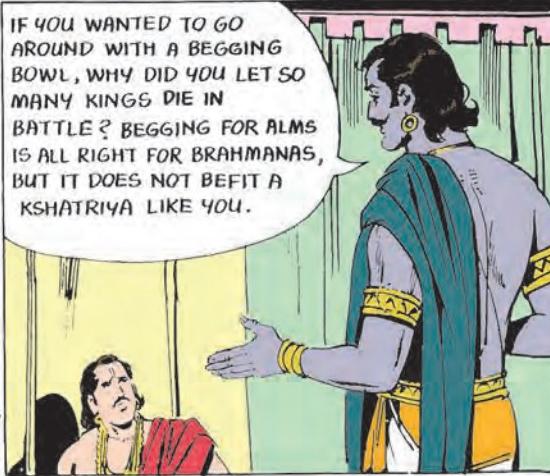
"TURNING TO ARJUNA HE SAID IN A SAD VOICE —



"ARJUNA WAS STARTLED AS ONE ACCUSED OF  
WRONG-DOING. THEN TAKING A THEATRICAL STANCE,  
HE STOOD UP TALL AND SMILING.



IF YOU WANTED TO GO  
AROUND WITH A BEGGING  
BOWL, WHY DID YOU LET SO  
MANY KINGS DIE IN  
BATTLE? BEGGING FOR ALMS  
IS ALL RIGHT FOR BRAHMANAS,  
BUT IT DOES NOT BEFIT A  
KSHATRIYA LIKE YOU.



DON'T DISCARD THIS HARD-EARNED WEALTH, O KING ! THIS EARTH WHICH WAS RULED EARLIER BY DILIPA, NRIGA, NAHUSHA, AMBARISHA AND MANDHATA IS NOW IN YOUR CONTROL. COME PREPARE TO TAKE OVER THE REINS OF THE EMPIRE AND PERFORM THE ASHWAMEDHA YAJNA.



"BUT YUDHISHTHIRA WAS ADAMANT.

HEAR ME, O ARJUNA,  
I AM DETERMINED TO DWELL  
IN THE FOREST, EATING FRUITS  
AND ROOTS, WEARING DEERSKIN  
AND BARK AND WITH MY HAIR  
MATTED IN A KNOT. IN FASTING  
AND MEDITATION, I WILL  
SPEND MY REMAINING DAYS.



"BHEEMA, NAKULA AND SAHADEVA ALSO TRIED TO DISSUADE YUDHISHTHIRA FROM HIS RESOLVE, BUT HE REMAINED STUBBORNLY SILENT. THEN DRAUPADI ADDRESSED HIM IN HER SWEET VOICE —

LIKE THE "CHATAKA" BIRDS\*, YOUR BROTHERS ARE REPEATEDLY BESEECHING YOU TO ACCEPT THE THRONE. WHY DON'T YOU LISTEN TO THEIR ENTREATIES ?

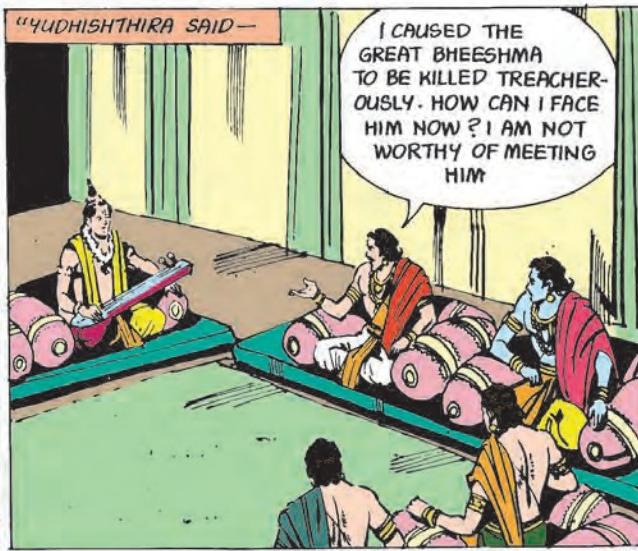
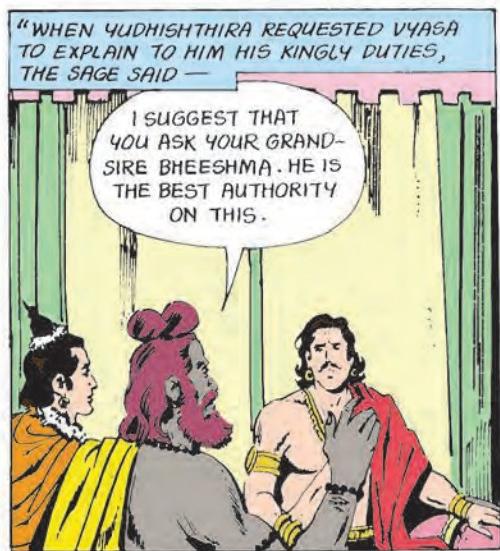
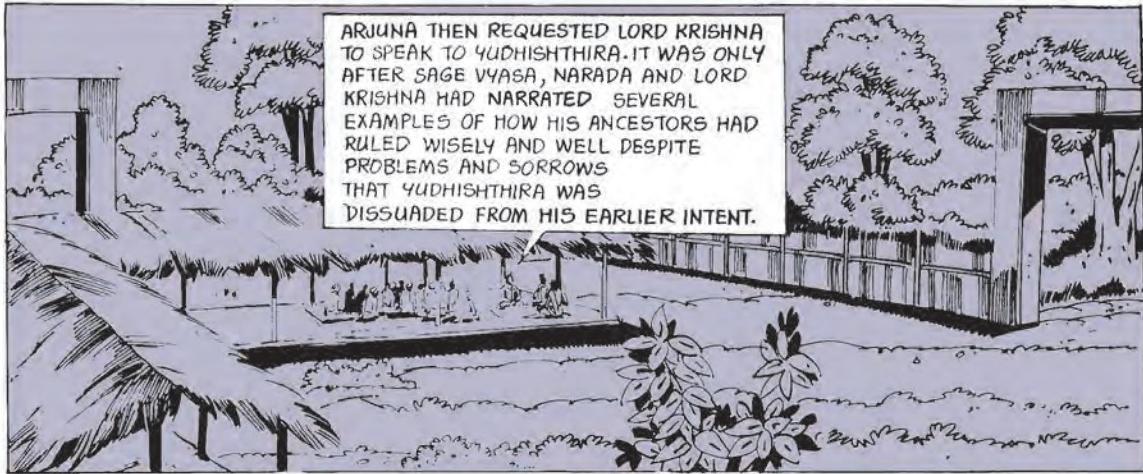


THEY HAVE GONE THROUGH SO MUCH SUFFERING FOR YOUR SAKE. DID YOU NOT PROMISE THEM THAT YOU WOULD DEFEAT THE KAURAVAS IN BATTLE AND CONQUER THE EARTH ? WHY DO YOU DISAPPOINT US NOW ?



"THEN VYASA SPOKE TO YUDHISHTHIRA AT LENGTH. WITH INSPIRING TALES AND WISE COUNSEL, HE TRIED TO PERSUADE HIM TO RETURN TO THE CITY AND TAKE UP HIS DUTIES AS A KING.



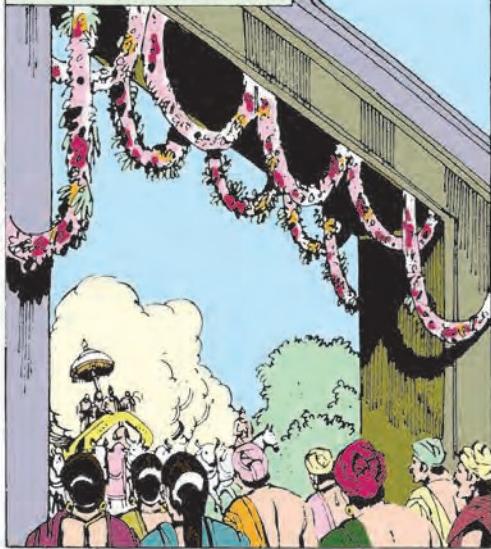


"THEY RETURNED TO THEIR CAPITAL IN A MAGNIFICENT PROCESSION. AS THEY ENTERED THE GATES OF THE CITY, YUDHISHTHIRA MOUNTED A NEW CHARIOT DRIVEN BY SIXTEEN WHITE BULLOCKS, BHEEMA HELD THE REINS, AND ARJUNA A WHITE UMBRELLA, WHILE NAKULA AND SAHADEVA CARRIED CHAMARAS \* ON EITHER SIDE OF THE KING. YUYUTSU, THE SOLE SURVIVING SON OF DHRITARASHTRA, FOLLOWED IN A WHITE CHARIOT. ON A GOLDEN CHARIOT WERE KRISHNA AND SATYAKI FOLLOWED BY A LONG RETINUE IN CHARIOTS AND PALANQUINS.



YUDHISHTHIRA'S CORONATION

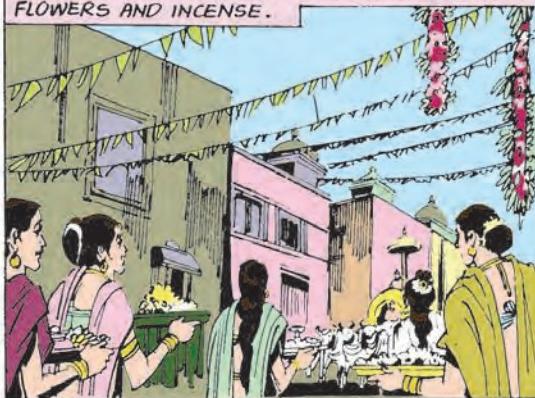
"THE CROWDS THRONDED THE CITY GATES TO WELCOME THE KING."



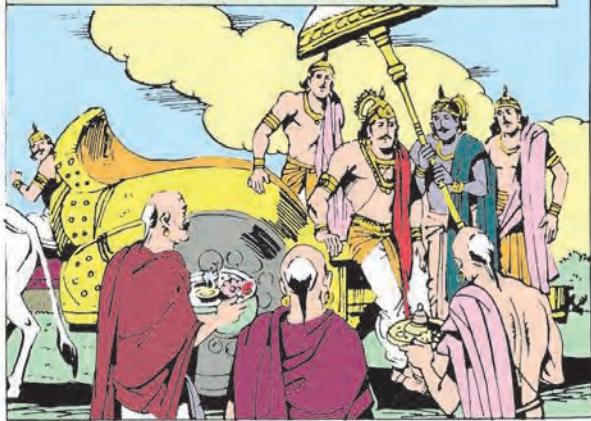
"AMIDST THE CHANTING OF VEDAS AND MUSIC AND THE WELCOMING CHEERS OF THE CITIZENS, YUDHISHTHIRA ENTERED THE CITY."



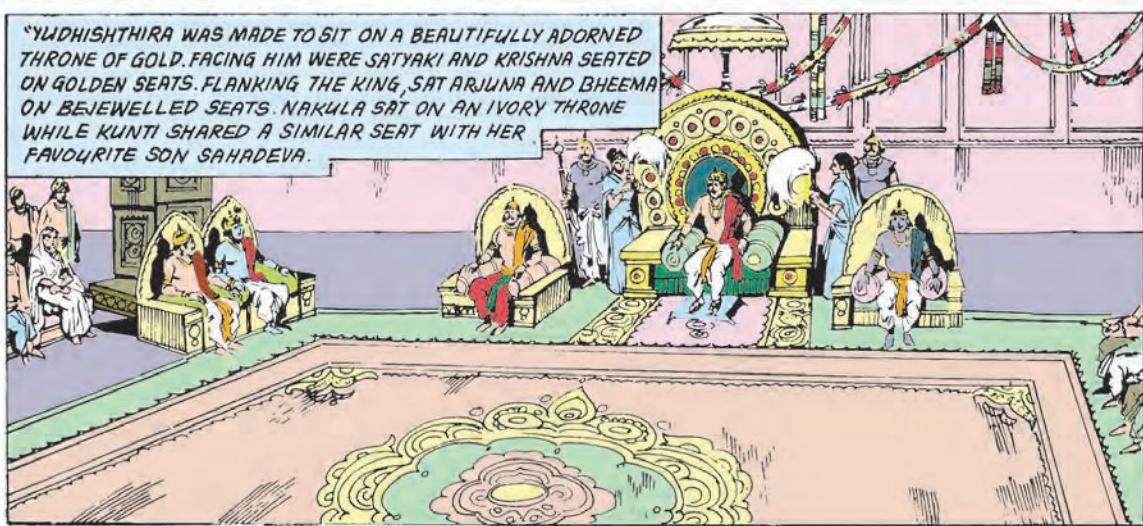
"THE STREETS WERE GAILY DECORATED WITH WHITE BANNERS AND STREAMERS AND THE AIR WAS FILLED WITH THE FRAGRANCE OF FRESH FLOWERS AND INCENSE."



"AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE PALACE, THEY WERE GREETED CEREMONIOUSLY BY THE BRAHMANS."



"YUDHISHTHIRA WAS MADE TO SIT ON A BEAUTIFULLY ADORNED THRONE OF GOLD. FACING HIM WERE SATYAKI AND KRISHNA SEATED ON GOLDEN SEATS. FLANKING THE KING, SAT ARJUNA AND BHEEMAP ON BEJEWELLED SEATS. NAKULA SAT ON AN IVORY THRONE WHILE KUNTI SHARED A SIMILAR SEAT WITH HER FAVOURITE SON SAHADDEVA."



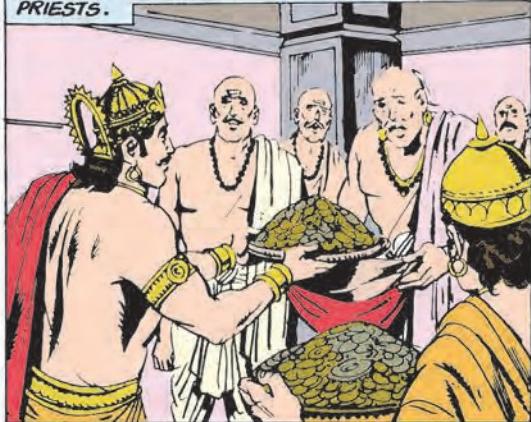
"ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM KRISHNA, DHAUMYA, THE ROYAL PRIEST, CONSTRUCTED AN ALTAR AND REQUESTED YUDHISHTHIRA AND DRAUPADI TO SIT BESIDE IT."



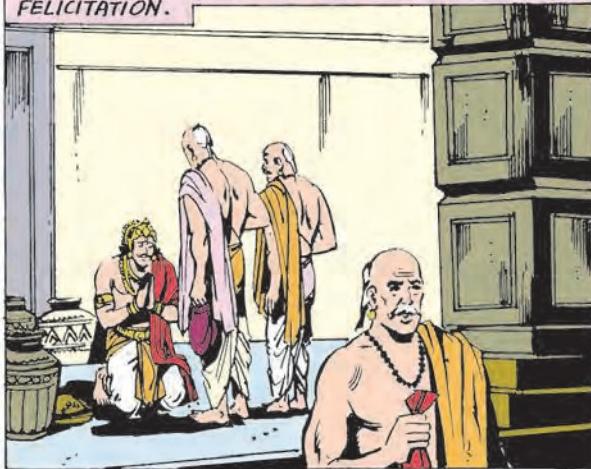
"HOLDING ALOFT HIS CONCH-SHELL PANCHAJANYA, KRISHNA CEREMONIOUSLY POURED WATER ON YUDHISHTHIRA'S HEAD."



"WHEN THE CORONATION RITES WERE COMPLETED, YUDHISHTHIRA GAVE AWAY A THOUSAND GOLD COINS TO THE PRESIDING PRIESTS."



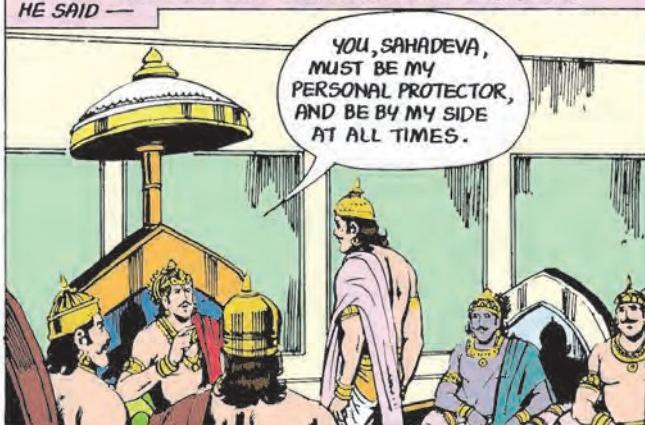
"THEY IN TURN SHOWERED HIM WITH PRAISE AND FELICITATION."



"HAVING TAKEN OVER AS THE KING, YUDHISHTHIRA THEN SET ABOUT ALLOCATING DUTIES TO HIS BROTHERS AND OTHERS. HE APPOINTED BHEEMA YUVARAJA."



"THE WISE VIDURA WAS MADE MINISTER. SANJAYA WAS PUT IN CHARGE OF FINANCE, NAKULA WAS ENTRUSTED WITH THE MAINTENANCE OF THE ARMY OF WHICH ARJUNA WAS NOW THE COMMANDER. TO SAHADEVA HE SAID —

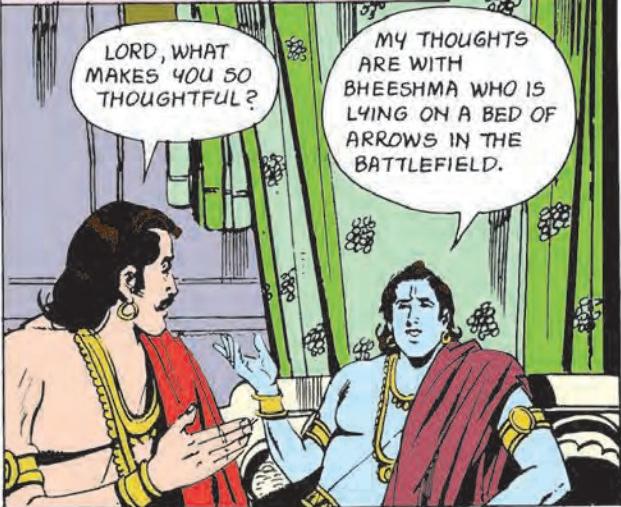


YUDHISHTHIRA'S CORONATION

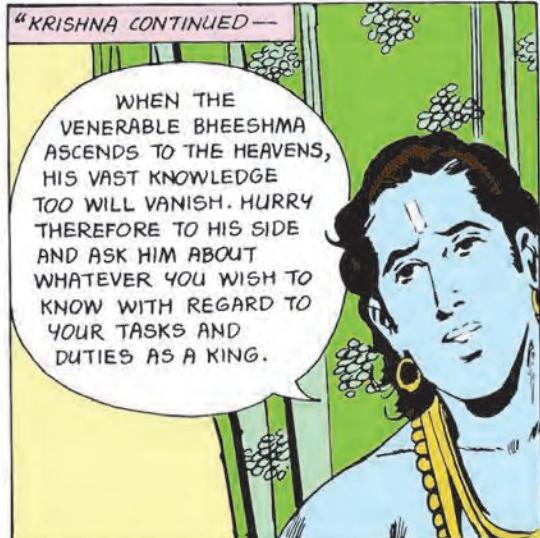
"THE NEXT MORNING WHEN YUDHISHTHIRA WENT TO GREET KRISHNA, HE FOUND HIM IN A THOUGHTFUL MOOD. SAID YUDHISHTHIRA



"BUT WHEN HIS QUERIES WERE MET WITH A PENSIVE SILENCE, YUDHISHTHIRA WAS PUZZLED.



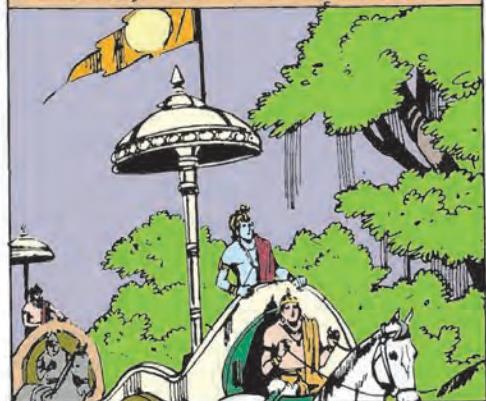
"KRISHNA CONTINUED—



"YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —



"KRISHNA THEN ORDERED HIS CHARIOT TO BE MADE READY, ACCCOMPANIED BY THE PANDAVAS, HE WENT TO THE BATTLEFIELD.



"LYING ON HIS BED OF ARROWS, BHEESHMA WAS SURROUNDED BY SEVERAL SAGES.

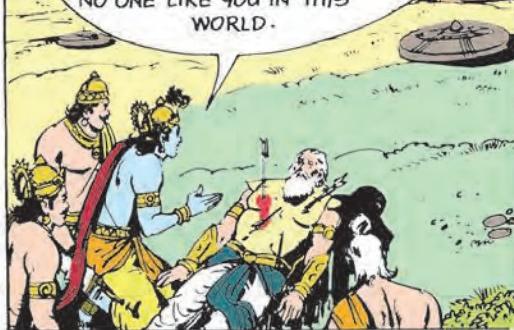


"BOWING RESPECTFULLY TO BHEESHMA, THE PANDAVAS TOO SAT BESIDE HIM. KRISHNA SAID—

IF A NEEDLE AS MUCH AS PRICKS ME, I CANNOT BEAR THE PAIN. HERE YOU LIE CALMLY WITH ALL THOSE ARROWS PIERCING YOUR BODY. YOUR STRENGTH IS INDEED AMAZING. THERE IS NO ONE LIKE YOU IN THIS WORLD.

"KRISHNA THEN EXPLAINED THE REASON FOR THEIR VISIT.

YUDHISHTHIRA IS GREATLY DISTURBED BY THE DEATH OF SO MANY OF HIS KINSMEN. CONSOLE HIM, O BHEESHMA, WITH YOUR WORDS OF WISDOM.



"BHEESHMA RAISED HIS HEAD A LITTLE ON HEARING KRISHNA'S WORDS, AND GREETED HIM RESPECTFULLY. KRISHNA SAID—

NOW ONLY FIFTY-SIX DAYS REMAIN BEFORE YOUR SOUL ASCENDS TO HEAVEN. WITH YOU, ALL YOUR KNOWLEDGE TOO WILL DISAPPEAR. THEREFORE ALL THESE PEOPLE HAVE COME TO BE ENLIGHTENED BY YOU. WILL YOU INSTRUCT THEM IN DHARMA, ARTHA\* AND YOGA?

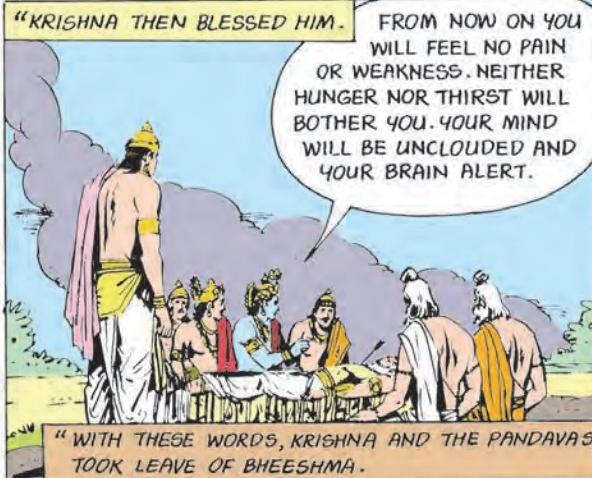
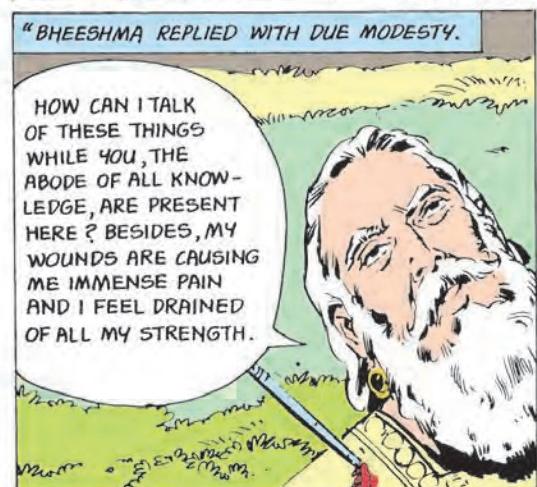


"BHEESHMA REPLIED WITH DUE MODESTY.

HOW CAN I TALK OF THESE THINGS WHILE YOU, THE ABODE OF ALL KNOWLEDGE, ARE PRESENT HERE? BESIDES, MY WOUNDS ARE CAUSING ME IMMENSE PAIN AND I FEEL DRAINED OF ALL MY STRENGTH.

"KRISHNA THEN BLESSED HIM.

FROM NOW ON YOU WILL FEEL NO PAIN OR WEAKNESS. NEITHER HUNGER NOR THIRST WILL BOther YOU. YOUR MIND WILL BE UNCLOUDED AND YOUR BRAIN ALERT.

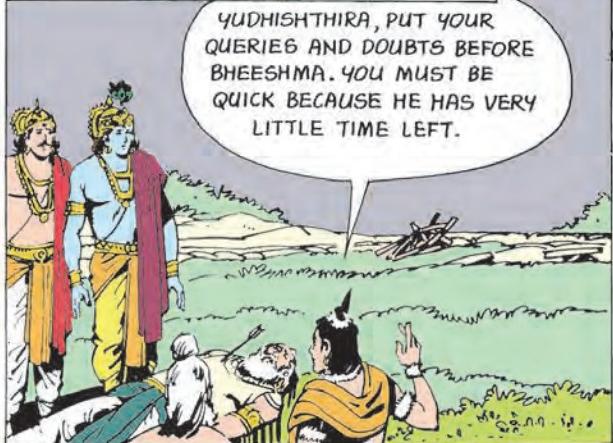


YUDHISHTHIRA'S CORONATION

"EARLY NEXT MORNING, DISPENSING WITH THEIR RETINUE OF SOLDIERS, THE PANDAVAS FOLLOWED KRISHNA TO THE BATTLEFIELD.



"NARADA, WHO WAS SEATED WITH THE OTHER RISHIS WHO WERE AROUND BHEESHMA, SAID —



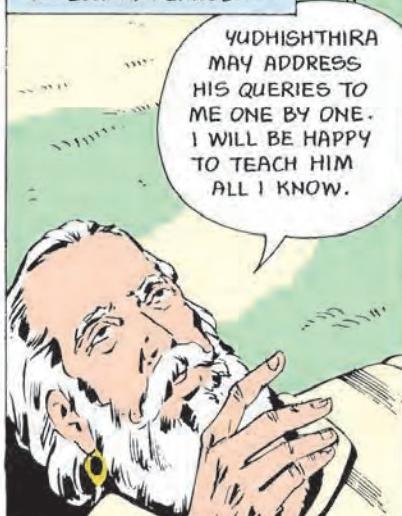
"AS THE SAGE SPOKE THUS, ALL THE PEOPLE SURROUNDING BHEESHMA DREW CLOSER, BUT NONE DARED TO SPEAK. THEN YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —



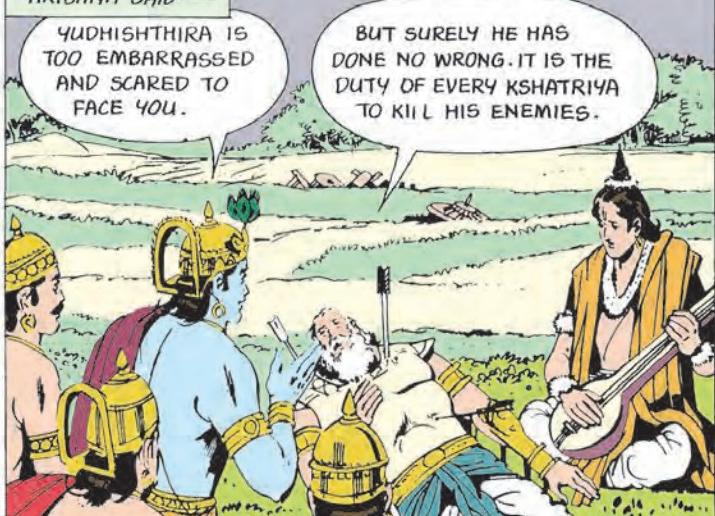
"AFTER GREETING HIM WITH DUE RESPECT, KRISHNA REQUESTED BHEESHMA —



"BHEESHMA REPLIED —



"KRISHNA SAID —



OVERWHELMED BY THESE WORDS,  
YUDHISHTHIRA TOUCHED BHEESHMA'S  
FEET RESPECTFULLY.

SIT DOWN, SON.  
DO NOT BE AFRAID.  
ASK ME ANYTHING  
YOU WANT.



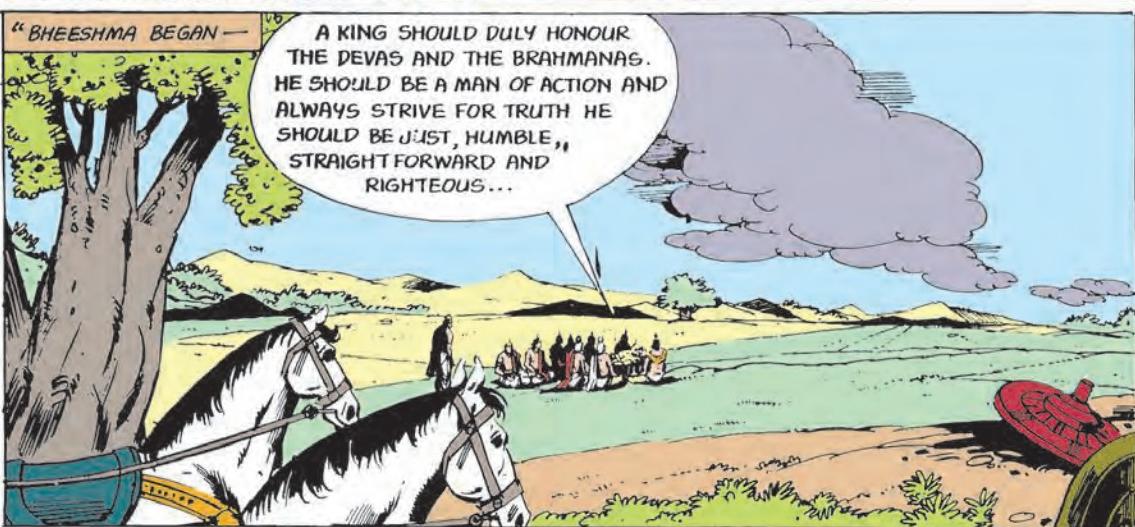
"YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —

THE DUTIES OF A KING  
ARE SAID TO BE OF THE  
HIGHEST ORDER. PLEASE  
DESCRIBE THEM TO ME.



"BHEESHMA BEGAN —

A KING SHOULD DULY HONOUR  
THE DEVAS AND THE BRAHMANS.  
HE SHOULD BE A MAN OF ACTION AND  
ALWAYS STRIVE FOR TRUTH HE  
SHOULD BE JUST, HUMBLE,,  
STRAIGHTFORWARD AND  
RIGHTEOUS...



"FOR LONG DID THE WISE BHEESHMA SPEAK  
TO YUDHISHTHIRA, ABOUT THE DUTIES OF A KING.  
THE SUN WAS ABOUT TO SET IN THE WEST, YET  
BHEESHMA'S NARRATION WAS NOT YET OVER.  
SUMMING UP HIS DAY-LONG DISCOURSE HE SAID —

THIS IS THE MERE  
ESSENCE OF KINGLY  
DUTIES. ASK ME ANY  
QUESTIONS YOU WANT,  
O YUDHISHTHIRA.

THANK YOU, O GRANDSIRE.  
THE SUN IS ABOUT TO  
SET AND I MUST TAKE  
YOUR LEAVE FOR  
TODAY.



"THE NEXT MORNING THE PANDAVAS EAGERLY  
RUSHED BACK TO BHEESHMA. YUDHISHTHIRA  
SAID —

COULD YOU EXPLAIN TO ME THE  
MEANING OF THE WORD 'RAJAN'.  
WHY IS A KING NECESSARY?



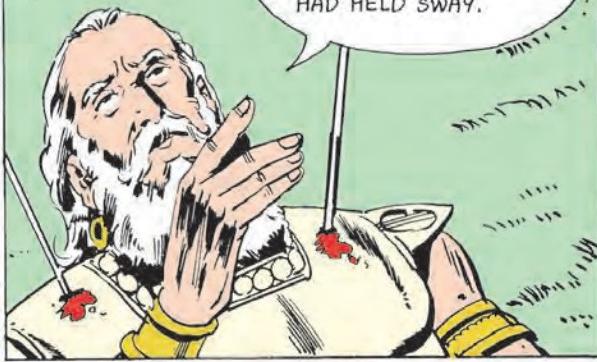
YUDHISHTHIRA'S CORONATION

"BHEESHMA THEN SPOKE OF THE DAYS OF YORE —

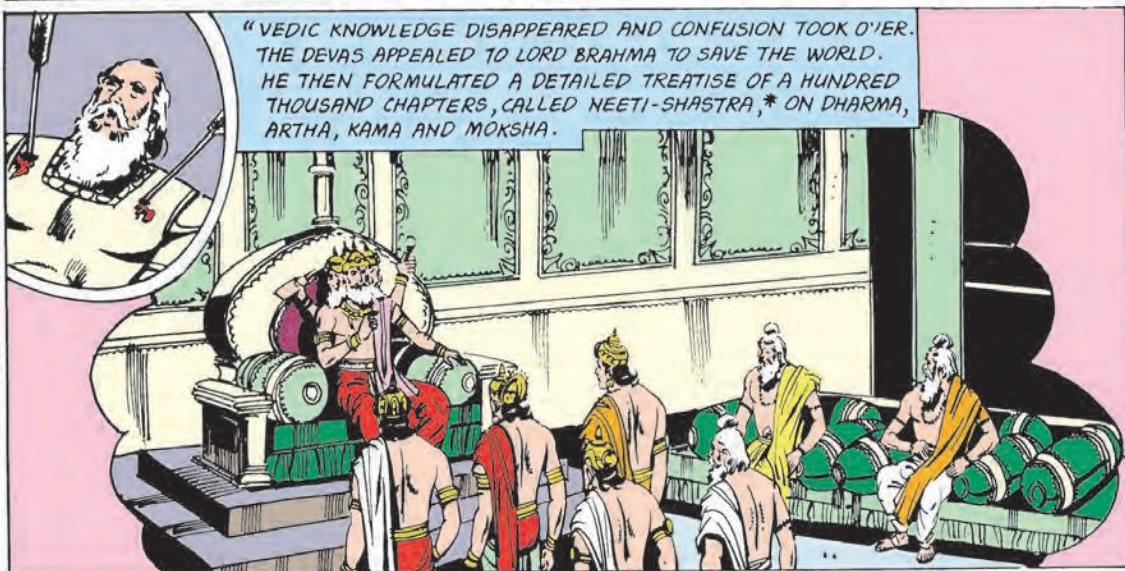
LONG, LONG AGO THERE WAS NEITHER KING NOR KINGDOM. NEITHER PUNISHMENT, NOR ANYONE TO METE IT OUT. THE PEOPLE LOOKED AFTER THEIR OWN WELFARE.



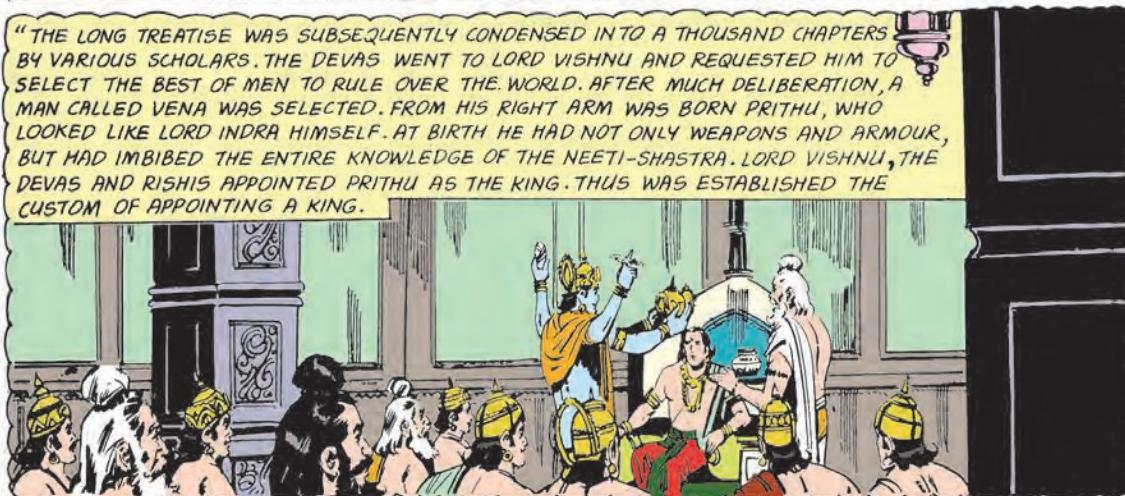
AS TIME WENT BY, HOWEVER, EVIL ENTERED THE HEARTS OF MEN. FIRST COVETOUSNESS THEN LUST, THEN WRATH REPLACED RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH HAD HELD SWAY.



"VEDIC KNOWLEDGE DISAPPEARED AND CONFUSION TOOK O'ER. THE DEVAS APPEALED TO LORD BRAHMA TO SAVE THE WORLD. HE THEN FORMULATED A DETAILED TREATISE OF A HUNDRED THOUSAND CHAPTERS, CALLED NEETI-SHAASTRA,\* ON DHARMA, ARTHA, KAMA AND MOKSHA.



"THE LONG TREATISE WAS SUBSEQUENTLY CONDENSED INTO A THOUSAND CHAPTERS BY VARIOUS SCHOLARS. THE DEVAS WENT TO LORD VISHNU AND REQUESTED HIM TO SELECT THE BEST OF MEN TO RULE OVER THE WORLD. AFTER MUCH DELIBERATION, A MAN CALLED VENA WAS SELECTED. FROM HIS RIGHT ARM WAS BORN PRITHU, WHO LOOKED LIKE LORD INDRA HIMSELF. AT BIRTH HE HAD NOT ONLY WEAPONS AND ARMOUR, BUT HAD IMBIBED THE ENTIRE KNOWLEDGE OF THE NEETI-SHAASTRA. LORD VISHNU, THE DEVAS AND RISHIS APPOINTED PRITHU AS THE KING. THIS WAS ESTABLISHED THE CUSTOM OF APPOINTING A KING.

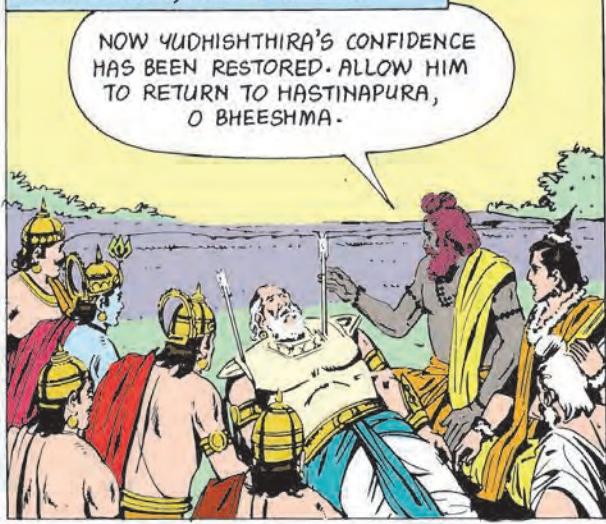


\* A CODE OF CONDUCT

"THUS FOR SEVERAL DAYS DID BHEESHMA-CHARYA INSTRUCT YUDHISHTHIRA, ANSWERING HIS QUERIES, REMOVING HIS DOUBTS AND EXPLAINING THE CODE OF CONDUCT WITH STORIES AND NARRATIVES, DIALOGUES AND DISCUSSIONS FROM HIS VAST FUND OF KNOWLEDGE.\*



"WHEN BHEESHMA LAY SILENT AFTER INSTRUCTING YUDHISHTHIRA, SAGE VYASA SAID—



"BHEESHMA SAID TO YUDHISHTHIRA—

YOU MAY GO BACK AND RULE YOUR KINGDOM LIKE THE GREAT KINGS BEFORE YOU. WHEN THE SUN BEGINS ITS NORTHWARD JOURNEY, COME BACK TO ME.

I WILL DO SO.



"BOWING RESPECTFULLY TO BHEESHMA, YUDHISHTHIRA RETURNED TO HASTINAPURA. FIFTY DAYS LATER, HE RECALLED BHEESHMA'S WORDS AND SENT FLOWERS AND INCENSE, SILKS AND SANDALWOOD IN PREPARATION FOR THE GRANDSIRE'S END.



"WITH GANDHARI AND DHRITARASHTRA LEADING THE WAY, YUDHISHTHIRA MADE HIS WAY TO THE BATTLEFIELD ACCOMPANIED BY HIS BROTHERS AND LORD KRISHNA TO PAY HIS LAST RESPECTS TO THE VENERABLE BHEESHMA."



"YUDHISHTHIRA SAID—

HERE I AM WITH MY BROTHERS AND LORD KRISHNA. KING DHRITARASHTRA, MINISTERS OF THE COURT ARE HERE TOO ALONG WITH THE CITIZENS OF HASTINAPURA. PLEASE OPEN YOUR EYES AND LOOK AT US.



\* THIS INSTRUCTION OF BHEESHMA TO KING YUDHISHTHIRA IS THE FAMOUS SHANTIPARVA OF MAHABHARATA

YUDHISHTHIRA'S CORONATION

"BHEESHMA OPENED HIS WEARY EYES AND SAID —

IT IS FORTUNATE THAT YOU HAVE ARRIVED HERE IN TIME. I HAVE BEEN LYING FOR FIFTY-EIGHT DAYS ON THIS BED OF SHARP ARROWS, BUT I FEEL I HAVE BEEN HERE FOR A HUNDRED YEARS. AT LONG LAST, THE SUN HAS TURNED HIS CHARIOT TOWARDS THE NORTH.



"TURNING TO DHRITARASHTRA, HE SAID —

WISE AND LEARNED AS YOU ARE, DO NOT Grieve OVER YOUR SONS. WHAT EVER HAPPENED WAS INEVITABLE. CONSIDER THE PANDAVAS TO BE YOUR OWN CHILDREN.



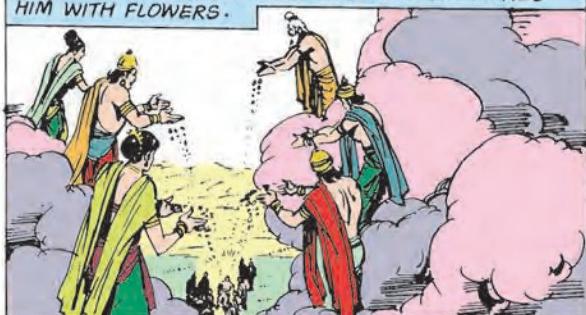
"BHEESHMA THEN ADDRESSED KRISHNA —

ALLOW ME, O LORD, OF THE UNIVERSE, TO LEAVE THIS BODY OF MINE.

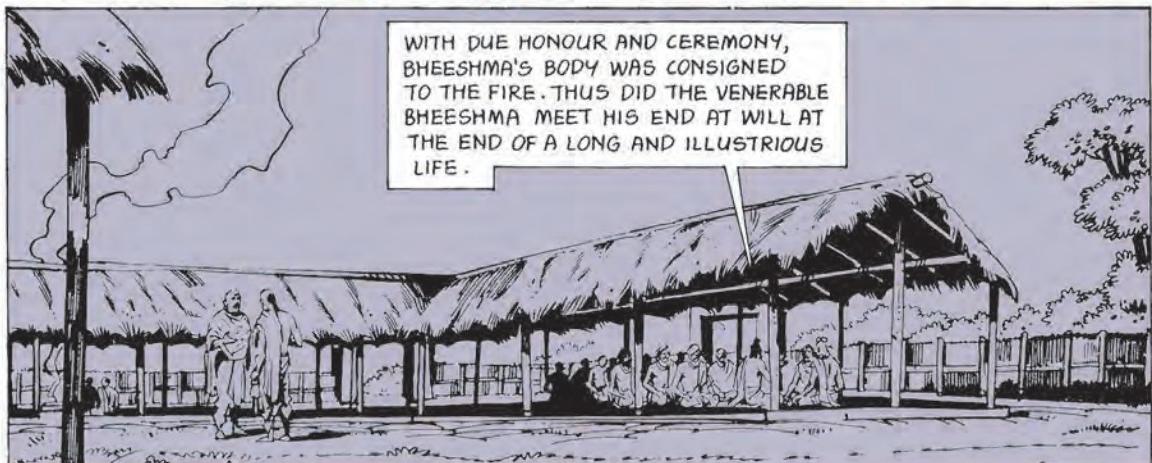
I GRANT YOU YOUR WISH, YOU HAVE THE POWER TO SUMMON DEATH AT WILL.



"BHEESHMA'S FACE SHONE WITH AN ETHEREAL SMILE. WITH HIS YOGIC POWERS, HE WILLED HIMSELF TO DIE. THE ONLOOKERS BEHELD A STRANGE PHENOMENON. AS EACH PART OF HIS BODY BECAME LIFELESS, THE ARROWS THEREIN FELL OFF AND THE WOUNDS WERE HEALED. WHEN THE LIFE FORCE FINALLY ESCAPED THROUGH HIS SKULL, THE HEAVENS RESOUNDED WITH CELESTIAL MUSIC AND SHOWERED HIM WITH FLOWERS.



WITH DUE HONOUR AND CEREMONY, BHEESHMA'S BODY WAS CONSIGN ED TO THE FIRE. THUS DID THE VENERABLE BHEESHMA MEET HIS END AT WILL AT THE END OF A LONG AND ILLUSTRIOUS LIFE.



THUS ENDS THE FORTIETH SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA MAHABHARATA.